AMERICANA
RIP
FIDO

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# Letter from the Collective

I've lived almost my entire life in Oakland, California, one of the most diverse cities in America, which is what makes us so special. We're a melting pot of so many different cultures, with amazing food, places, parks, people, and culture. No matter how much I see the same places it never gets old to me. I love Oakland, it shaped who I am today and I will always be proud to be from here, but I will never be proud to be from America. We are a country founded on the genocide of indigenous people who are refused their rightful ownership of the land we stole, and we continue to commit so many genocides abroad and in our own home. Surviving gets more expensive each day, thousands of black and brown families are being torn apart by ICE and the police, we're rapidly accelerating the death of our ecosystems, rights for women and queer people are being stripped away, and trans people as a whole are being labeled as "Nihilistic Violent Extremists". This did not start with Trump, we've been this way from the start, we're just now seeing the effects of the foundations laid for centuries. It's disgusting to see this inhumanity tolerated by so many people and face no meaningful pushback from Democrats. Americana to me is a facade, the land of false promises, suffering, and hatred. There is no punishment those in power can ever face to make the pain they've caused justified. —Viridescence

My parents were welcomed to this country with the open arms of the Portland queer, trans and drag scene. They were loved and shown the ropes of western American life but never asked to assimilate. I often think of my early childhood, apartments called "casitas," where we lived among other immigrants and friends. Head Start, a program for low income families to have their 3-5 year olds have a preliminary school education, taught me English with this kickass woman teacher Rosa. She also was a child of immigrants and although not a part of the curriculum, had us try and make food from different cultures. Although many of my class were latino, they were a variety of ethnicities and racial identity. I might be romanticizing this life I once lived in but I truly am not. Moving to a traditional suburb, the white population I was accustomed to went from a cool 65% to a ridiculous 90%. It was really isolating when I reflect back .We still went to all the block parties, family friends making a collective pool of money just in case one of us was in a bad spot. There is nothing more *Americana* to me than those casitas, talking with other children with our limited English and saying words forgotten, remembered in our native tongue and the mutual respect. —Alexa Cruz Abarca

I feel like my view of the states is a series of fragments of friends, places, events, and my own understanding of how I came to be within it. i'm working on making these pieces make sense. I grew up in a bubble of white culture in central oregon, and When i actually started learning american history, both my grandparents and parents existences as became a bit sinister to me, like how could they so complacently be apart of this system? the american dream is fucked, so is politics, and the fact that racial profiling was literally made legal to try to get brown folks out of the US is nuts bananas and it feels like we are living in a fascist dystopia. All in all though, history helps teach us how to build community, build solidarity, work together and ultimately stay together during the shittiest times. —caarrp

I was born on a Royal Air Force base to an American father and British mother, and at five-or-so-years-old I moved to North Carolina, then Georgia, then Florida and finally Oregon. Which is to say: I've spent sickly sweet summers dripping sweat down to my bones in the heat wave of a hurricane; I've kissed the old growths in swampland, hiding away from God and so many children playing wolves or cats or horses at their gnarled feet; I've watched the terrain change before my eyes — across rivers, valleys, mountains, deserts — lulled to sleep by a dead dog's whine and the oil slick monster growling underneath.

*Americana* is what you make it — and how America's made you. Somehow, now, I'm here, and a socialist, and a revolutionary and a journalist and the country I was born in wouldn't even recognize the first and last name I've changed or the sex I've had legally reconsidered. Somehow, now, my mother and younger brother are a decade away, back in the king's country, living with family I might not see for another 10 years myself. At least until someone can afford the plane ticket.

I'm not sure where my hopeful career in the media will lead me — if I'll stay in the U.S., if I'll stay in Oregon, if I'll ever leave Eugene. Either way, a little part of me will still linger here, I think. Where else would I want to be?

—Robin Bailey

To me, *Americana* is as weirdly dichotomous, diverse, hypocritical, dysfunctional, and beautiful as the nation itself. It's chalk full of people and cultures from every corner of the globe, yet most of those people are denied the American Dream and the freedom America boasts so loudly, on the basis of their skin color, class, or religion. Americana sees all: the blistering inequality, racism, classism, sexism — all wound together into the ugliest beast you've ever seen. But Americana is also the beauty of communities built and inhabited by all sorts of people, the different foods and games they love and the way they share that with every friendly face they come across. It is the acts of defiance big and small that happen daily, and the activism which sees both the dream of a land of the free, and the lies that keep it for a few. Americana sings of strife, hardship, cruelty, and greed. And at the same time, the song is defined by love, mutual aid, community and a resistance that never gives up. So carry forth that spirit which yearns for equality and opportunity for all, and fight like hell to get it. —Love, Eclipse

## Amoeba (Brain-Eating)

*Written by Robin Bailey*

Are there people
past the mangroves?

Red root steeples
pointing down below.

Swamp beast made from mud
& muck, teased by luck. Toes
wriggle in the shallow all
maggoty-like; heads of past
passersby impaled on pikes.

I have a few bad habits
and more lost gods.

Would you hole with rabbits,
against all odds ?

Illustrations and background by caarrp

## Den

*Written by Robin Bailey*

come with me down foxholes,
in hideaway homes. i can tell
you stories, can bare to you
my throat—or yours against mine.

your words will have substance, soft
in the hollowed-away substrate.

we are swallowed down here.

## Ball(o/e)t

*Written by Robin Bailey*

Snuggling up to your bedside
manner, longing for that triassic
cuddle; making myself known
in all my endless acts of devotion:
each vote of confidence spells
out my name in a stunning
display of electoral power
(fireworks, or a star
rising in the east-
west coast).

What if I laid my head
on your shoulder? Is it
so much to want common ground
— by which, I mean, you on the
ground, or me — pinned between
knees, chests heaving, red cheeks
& roses.

I'm painfully aware of who
I am (or what I try to be),
my positionality in these
trying times. Still, I want
& want you, want him,
want to rip & tear both your
worlds asunder
if just to get my point
across: I am loveable,
so you should love me.

## home is a place i'll return to when i die

*Written by Achilles*

tell me where the house is so i can burn it down.
i'll lock myself in a prison where the rot can't reach.

oregon can wrap its cold hands around my throat
and choke me till coins fall from my pockets. i wander

through the streets, alcohol spilling from a bar into
the alley. a man with a woman on each arm nods

at me as i pass. i'll confess — i want to return to my california
grave, want to dig my way up from under the cold ground,

my dreams a cobweb of ideas, a patchwork quilt, a metaphor
that fails in my untalented hands. the woman who taught me

water polo is dying from a lump in her breast. stage three.
i'll confess — i hated the sport. i'd love it again if i needed to.

i'd give up everything and nothing to leave this city behind.
let me go home to death in a different state.

i'll pretend that i still love the ocean. i'll dig out my old
swimsuit, and do one more lap around the pacific.

i promise i'll find a good metaphor for dying.
california isn't golden anymore — it's ash.

## Why are Cowboys so fucking hot?

*Written by*
*Ashu Bazuzi*
*Illustrations by*
*Roman Cronus and caarrp*

Clothes and fashion are important to flesh because they frame the ways we do and don't see it. They are the camera angles from which we view our bodies. The cowboy fashion style is one that carries fantasies with it, both sexual fantasies and fantasies of character.

The cowboy mythos has always been as much about the clothes as the bodies sweating under the desert sun beneath them. A cowboy is tight jeans clinging to every curve, assless chaps to help with riding, and a spurred boots that make you jealous of the horse.

Cowboy fashion is also often an excuse to reveal flesh, even it would be very impractical if you were actually herding cows or wrestling steer. Hot pants short enough for a bit of ass to spill out means risking sunburn on those toned legs unless you use sunscreen (here, I'll apply it for you). A belt hanging lose to reveal pelvic bones basically nullifies the entire point of a belt since you still have to keep a hand on your pants, ala Lil Nas X during his SNL performance of Montero where his pants ripped and it looked like he was holding his cock the whole time (not an unwelcome sight). Speaking of, that performance is hot as hell. Nas carries himself with so much cowboy swagger even leaving his Old Town Road era and into this devilish leather outfit that in my mind he transports leather into the Wild West. I'm changing the definition of cowboy to include leather just for that.

On the topic of changing definitions of "cowboy," some questionable inclusions made the cut into the collage, in fact all of them are questionable. The Kentucky Gentlemen are, as their name suggests, far from cowboy country. They're only regular country. The Wild West is basically irrelevant here actually, probably because it's not so wild anymore. Lil Nas X is from Atlanta, Orville Peck is South African, Pete Conlan is a New Yorker, and Amelio Roblez Avila was a Mexican Revolutionary. Avila is interesting because he's the only real historical figure on here, but he's still not an actual cowpoke. But there's something impeccably cowboy about this trans man commander who'd threaten people with a gun if they misgendered him, who became an expert marksman and rider as a young man, perhaps before he even knew he was a man. He simply can't be excluded; he has too much big dick energy, he's serving too much cunt.

Perhaps my attraction to the cowboy comes from Avila's capability and bravery. As a child I spent a long time feeling useless and powerless. The outside world seemed scary and difficult, and I felt I lacked many of the skills I needed to survive it. At the start of my teen years, I decided to change that. Since then I've been doing, to quote Tenet, cowboy

shit. I started trying difficult, foreign feeling things for the experience and the pleasure of knowing I have the chutzpah to step up to the plate. I've snuck out of the house and bused eight hours to buy a jacket, I've learned to cook, I've gone to school. In Avila and other cowboys I see both the kind of person I respect and the kind of person I want to be. I face the classic queer conundrum: Do I want to be them or do I want to fuck them? Like every either/or choice in my bisexual life, I say hell yes.

The fantasy of the cowboy is based on the grit actual cowboys would have needed as cattle herders, though perhaps exaggerated by Buffalo Bill and Hollywood since. I'm not herding cows, but I need as much grit as any other college student and burgeoning adult. I've been working on a drag king persona in my head, a cowpoke named Futch Cassidy. They're very sexualized, and the gimmick is that they switch between feminine and masculine body language on a whim. I've never done any kind of drag before, so it will be a leap if I ever try it, another leap to imagine that my flesh could be someone's fantasy, and a third to present masculinity and trust that people will follow me through femininity and back. It's going to take a lot of bravery and grit and will to try, but I think I can do it. Buuuuuuuuuut

I can't go on about cowboys without acknowledging the racism in the mythos. First off, many historical cowboys were Black, which is important for two reasons. First, the "boy" in cowboy is then from the infantilization of Black men, rooting back to slavery. Second, a settler like myself wearing cowboy boots could be cultural appropriation. Cowboy fashion is also closely linked with Indigenous and Mexican culture. Another issue is that cowboys are frontiersmen, seen as pushing out to the "Wild" West. This story completely ignores the Indigenous people that had been stewarding and caretaking the supposedly untamed land since time immemorial. In the Pacific Northwest, settlers are still attached to the idea of pristine, untouched nature, and it pervades our self-image. Think about that next time you go hiking. Westerns either bathe in the violence of colonialism while demonizing Native Americans with Cowboys vs Indians tropes, or just ignore Native peoples entirely. Thus Native Americans in Westerns are either biologically eliminated or historically eliminated. The grit and capability too is just as much about providing for yourself and being free as it is about violence. It's the strength to genocide Native Americans and to extract their land. The violence of land extraction is baked into the language of the mythos. The land is called "wild" and "untamed," and cowboys are there to break, master, and enslave it.

There is a very real argument that a white man in a cowboy getup is a hate symbol. John Hamm's character on the newest season of Fargo is an excellent deconstruction of this phenomenon, the cowboy subverted as a patriarchal white supremacist. That said, "subversion" is still mostly the right word. Actual cowboy culture was not only Black, but Queer. Part of why so many Black men went west and became cowboys was to escape racism in the east, and Queer men similarly found sanctuary here. While I'll need to keep wrestling with these ideas, cowboys remain a symbol of courage, and we need courage. Oh, and hot people. Hot people make everything better.

# A new threat of terror: U.S Conservatism and the value of "Nature"

*Skyler Outler*

*Introduction*

"Sex differences are established in natural law; that is, the content of that law is established by nature and therefore, presumably, has universal validity." (Butler 29). This quote from Judith Butler is from their 2024 book Who's Afraid of Gender? In this book, Butler talks about the anti-gender movement that conservatives around the world are supporting. In this quote, Butler describes U.S. conservatism's core value: "Natural Order." This idea of a "natural order" is what U.S conservatives use for their justification against progressive policies. If something doesn't align with the "natural order," it is wrong. However, what is "the natural order" of society that they are referring to? According to the Heritage Foundation, a right-wing think tank that wrote Project 2025,the natural order is "essential to a flourishing society, without it, everything will collapse." Throughout the document, they point to things like DEI, Critical Race Theory, and Sex and Gender education as things that mess up this "natural order" of society. However, the change to the natural order that they are referring to is the changing social climate that is no longer championing white cis heteronormativity, or the White Phallocratic reality.

In this essay, I am going to illustrate how U.S. Conservative ideology is enacting terrorism on the American people through nationalism that is rooted in the idea of "Natural Social Order," which coincides with upholding the white phallocratic reality. I am using Project 2025 and other documents and resources from the Heritage Foundation as my source of critique on American Conservatism. In particular, I will critique the notion of freedom that they are trying to protect as the Heritage Foundation attacks DEI initiatives in the Department of Education through book bans, conversations about gender, sexuality, and other attacks on diversity. I will carry out this critique through Emmanuel Levinas' conception of freedom and responsibility to show the shortcomings of this narrow notion of freedom that Conservatives value.

*White Phallocratic Reality and The Natural Order*

The White Phallocratic reality is defined as male-centered. It correlates with the universal natural order of things, putting men as active agents who are the origins of truth and reality. In contrast, women are the inactive or passive agents who follow and support this version of truth and reality. This is described by Marilyn Frye as "Man understands his perception as simultaneously generating and being generated by a point of view. Insofar as

the phallocratic scheme permits the understanding that women perceive at all, it features women's perceptions as passive, repetitive of men's perception, unauthorized." (Frye 86-87). I am expanding this to include whiteness as well, as I believe that whiteness operates in the same way. Furthermore, the white phallocratic reality is what structures the natural order that conservatives are referring to and what they are trying to preserve. This idea of nature to conservatives is fundamental to their politics, as nature to them is described as follows: "That there exists an enduring moral order. That order is made for man, and man is made for it: human nature is constant, and moral truths are permanent." (Heritage Foundation.com).

This idea of nature structured around the white phallocratic reality presupposes three elements: 1) The assumption that nature is also confined to a binary system, and anything outside of this binary is outside of nature. An example of this is the insistence that there are only two sexes, Male and Female, and no such thing as gender. 2) This strict binary setup presupposes nature to be hierarchical as well. 3) Nature is also universalized, which assumes that it is unchanging, constant, truthful, and ultimately good. Therefore, if you go against nature, you are rejecting the truth, you are rejecting goodness, and doing so leads to moral destruction and mayhem. You can see all three of these elements of nature working together in Project 2025 as they reiterate the importance of "Nature" through their issue with "Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity" in Title IX.

In Title IX, they claim that the Biden administration replaced or redefined sex, which in nature is fixed with "SOGI" (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity). Replacing sex with this term is acting outside of nature, and the actions that follow this are putting the natural order at risk. Conservatives state that doing so has led us astray from nature, as policies "redefine" natural categories such as sex, through gender-inclusive language in federal policy. In Title IX, they claim that "replacing" sex with "SOGI" is putting women and girls in danger of being assaulted by men in locker rooms and bathrooms stating that doing such is not only unfair to women and girls, but threatens the right of free speech and religion to those who disagree with this "redefinition". I find that their issue with SOGI in Title IX is not "redefining" but the expansion of such categories, as well as expanding these civil rights and protections to those who defy or reject the binary categorization of sex/gender.

Through this rejection of the binary system of sex, it challenges its notion of it as natural and the idea that it is fixed. Project 2025 states that the new administration is going to fix this by restoring the Title IX regulation with "Insistence that 'sex' is properly understood as a FIXED biological fact." (Project 2025, 334). Furthermore, the Heritage Foundation and other conservative think tanks use the idea of nature as their guiding principle against inclusivity, as this is acting outside of nature and threatening the social order. The principles of variety and the principle of imperfectability are principles that underlie this notion of nature, as well as impose an element of hierarchy on nature and the idea that inequality is natural and creates a hierarchy and unfair power relations. In the principle of variety, they think equality is "narrowing uniformity" and "all other attempts at leveling must lead, at best, to social stagnation" (Kirk, Ten Conservative Principles). They believe that inequalities are just natural differences that must exist in a society. Adding to this sentiment is the principle of imperfectability, which expands the former principle even further, as trying to alleviate inequality is an act of utopian thinking, and not possible for a healthy, flourishing society. Stating: "To seek utopia is to end in disaster, the conservative says: We are not made for perfect things. All that we reasonably can expect is a tolerably ordered, just, and free society, in which some evils, maladjustments, and suffering will continue to lurk" (Kirk). This principle then goes on to state that "By proper attention to prudent reform, we may preserve and improve this tolerable order." (Kirk). When conservatives say that they want to preserve or save American ideals, they want to preserve this "natural" order that is hierarchical, unfair and exploitative...

*Full essay, footnotes, and references on website.*

# On Being Patriotic

*Written by Anonymous*

*Collage by*
*Rebecca Kartchner*

At this point in my life, I've heard hundreds, if not thousands, of renditions of the national anthem. Being in marching band since eighth grade, I've played the national anthem hundreds of times. In rehearsal. At performances. I've played it as a solo and with a band of hundreds. I've played different arrangements. Over and over and over.

It doesn't sound real anymore. It's a collection of notes. It's exasperated, shouted reminders to smooth out some notes and shorten others, attacks and releases and phrasing and breath. Dynamics. Shaping. Trills. Artistry piled on until the song underneath is lost. All in the name of a more perfect sound. A better representation of our patriotism. After all, my high school band director said every year, everybody knows this song. It's an honor to play it. They know when you mess it up. And you will not embarrass yourselves by messing it up.

So we practiced until we had it perfect. Every single year. And every single year, we got the same lecture- particularly the trumpets who had the opening notes. The new freshmen practically shivering under his glare, the upperclassmen nodding along to the speech. It has to be perfect. It has to sound American.

Now, after so many times repeating it, like saying the same word over and over again, it doesn't sound like America. It sounds like nonsense.

There's so much nonsense coming out of America these days. Might as well add our anthem to it as well.

The big flag that the OMB uses for pregame takes a morning of rehearsal, every single band camp. It's a lot of logistics, getting it out of its bin, down the east tunnel, and out onto the field and opened up to the sunshine. There's at least fifty, probably closer to seventy people involved in the band who carry it out. Everyone is sweaty and tired, already thinking about lunch as we receive instructions on how to perform our part properly. Unfurling the flag a half-dozen times as the rest of the musicians play that one phrase in America the Beautiful over and over again.

It strains your shoulders and wrists to pull it taut so it won't touch the ground. You're bent backwards for minutes straight just to keep it up. It weighs so much. It billows in the slightest bit of wind, taking every last person around the perimeter to get it under control. It's a task that should be an honor, holding the national colors, and yet all I can think about is how much I can't wait to let it fall out of my hands, shake out my wrists and roll my shoulders. America hurts. Wish I could let it go.

And it touches the ground. Damn near every time it's brought out, it touches the ground. We do our best to hide it, but that bit in the middle as we're running it out, in the moments between the top and bottom separating and the sides taking up their positions, despite the yearly lecture on keeping it up, it hits the ground.

How poignant. America. A nation supposed to be a shining beacon, and we can't keep it from hitting the ground. We can hide it, though.

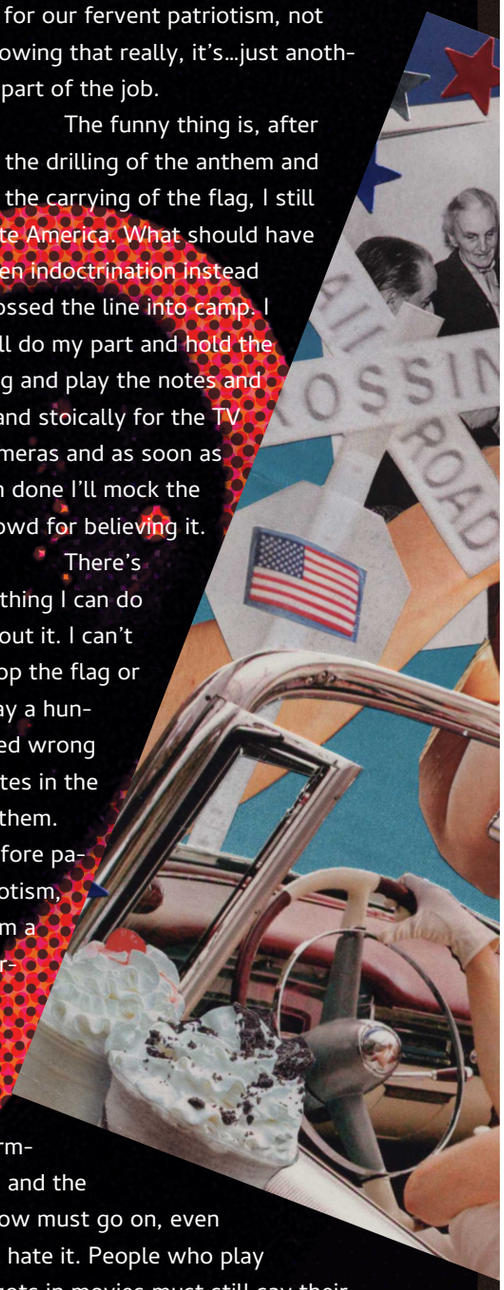
We'll pretend everything is fine and play our nonsense until we can't. Until the history books mock us for our fervent patriotism, not knowing that really, it's...just another part of the job.

The funny thing is, after all the drilling of the anthem and all the carrying of the flag, I still hate America. What should have been indoctrination instead crossed the line into camp. I will do my part and hold the flag and play the notes and stand stoically for the TV cameras and as soon as I'm done I'll mock the crowd for believing it.

There's nothing I can do about it. I can't drop the flag or play a hundred wrong notes in the anthem. Before patriotism, I am a performer, and the show must go on, even if I hate it. People who play bigots in movies must still say their lines, only hoping that the story will prove they're the bad guy.

Doesn't mean many of us out there believe it, though. And if all of us had the freedom to do what we really wanted out there... the flag would be on the ground.

And none of us could hide it.



## On Togetherness

*Written by Eclipse*

A burden shared is a burden halved; a joy shared is a joy doubled. It's a phrase that points towards a defining principle of being human: the desire to be known and loved by others. This instinct is uniquely situated to provide us with motivation and energy, especially when the going gets tough.

I'd like to describe this feeling another way, one that's personal to me and my experience. Whenever I'm going to my family's home after an especially long time away, like a term at school, I always look forward to my dog's reaction when I walk in. She gets the smiliest face on and does a full body wiggle, walking through my legs and doing excited circles all around me so I can give her lots of pets and hugs and such for a greeting. No matter what may be going on around me, how anxious or upset I may feel, it never fails to make me smile and lighten the load on my shoulders a little. The idea that my presence makes this creature so happy makes me euphoric to be alive. Whatever this feeling is, it has the power to send my spirits soaring, to restore my energy, my faith in being alive. Wherever you may get this feeling from, your family, your friends, your lover(s), or elsewhere, I hope you treasure it, for it is a verymost powerful thing indeed.

I wish society prioritized community more. Even in a world filled with more people than ever and connected by powerful technology, life still manages to be lonely and overwhelming for many. I believe that our hyper-individualistic approach to daily life leaves many people prey to desperation and helplessness. More often than not, when folks are struggling, be it with houselessness, hunger, or loneliness, it's up to them to find or make a solution. But not everyone is capable of overcoming such adversity on their own. However, society is more than capable. Within society, there is always someone who is ready and capable of lending a helping hand. The issue is finding and connecting with that group or person. What we lack is the community that prioritizes one another and lends a hand where it is needed.

Community is capable of providing for its inhabitants, not for some greater material good, but for the sake of the community itself. This is the spirit of mutual aid! When people come together to provide and be provided for, this is when we are strongest. Instead of having to fill the voids yourself, community can provide the support that turns that void into an opportunity. The opportunity to help someone in need, to make a connection and weave together a net of people that support each other, flexible as an octopus and strong as an elephant. When will we realize that the most valuable and important thing to human beings is other human beings?

# On Trans Women in Sports

*Written by Ivy*
*Illustration by Eclipse*

I've been an athlete my whole life. Whether it's been Baseball in elementary school, soccer in middle school, rowing in high school, or running & the stair master (my love <3) on my own in college, I've always enjoyed exercising. When I realized I was a transgender woman in my junior year of high school, I debated asking my coaches if I could join the women's team, as they had both shown their support for protecting transgender athletes. One of the coaches had a transgender son, and we had 3 transmasculine rowers on the team at the time. I ultimately decided against it and came to the unfortunate conclusion to quit rowing after high school as I feared something like the recent ban on transgender women in all NCAA women's athletics would happen. I also feared being unfairly targeted and harassed by people I don't even know.

Athletics are so important to growing children. They serve as an incredible outlet for children to learn important skills, make connections, have a passion for something, and stay active. Trans people and children should not be excluded from this. Forcing them to compete with their assigned gender at birth when they don't feel comfortable doing that is not allowing that. The whole trans women in sports debate is very much a non-issue that only exists to create a moral panic around transgender people, especially transgender women.

Almost every argument against transgender people is directed against transgender women and ignores the existence of transmasculine people entirely. Men are not pretending to be women to dominate in women's sports. If they were, there would have been more than 10 trans women out of the 500,000+ athletes competing in NCAA sports, and at least 1 transgender woman competing in the 2024 Paris Olympics. There is so much blatant misinformation about trans women competing in women's sports because the little information that is out there comes from wildly incorrect statements made by people who know nothing.

Lia Thomas is an American swimmer who pre-transition had multiple times recorded in top 100 in the nation and held the 6th fastest 1000 yard freestyle time in the nation as a college freshman. She swam on the men's team for a whole year after coming out and had to be on hormones for an entire year before being able to compete on the women's team to comply with regulations. These regulations for transgender athletes are understandable, and I am fine with them existing for college and professional level athletics only, and only as a requirement to compete, not practice, as long as trans women are allowed to compete in women's sports when they meet these requirements.

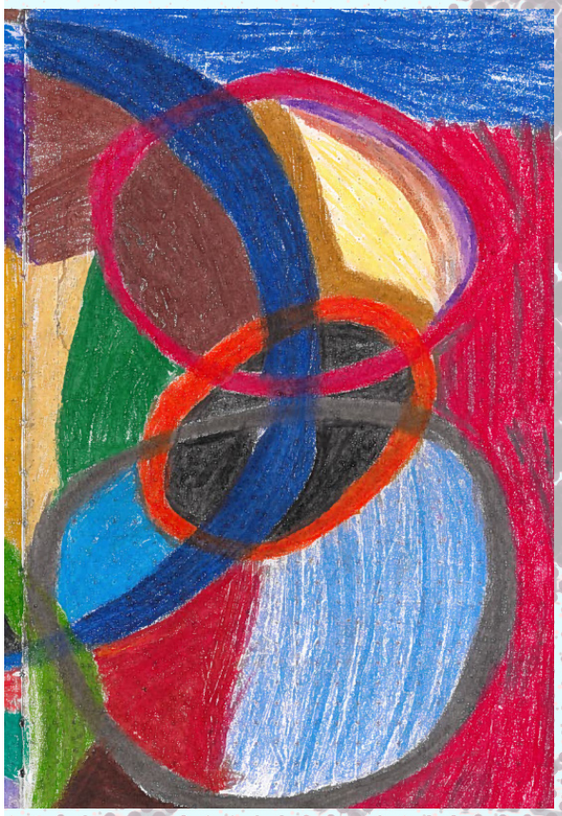
Claiming Lia Thomas suddenly became dominant after she transitioned is just factually wrong. After transitioning her times got worse as expected, as taking hormones deteriorates muscle mass, increases bone density, and increases body fat percentage, and she was still being beaten by cisgender female athletes. She still managed to win an NCAA D1 National Championship in the women's 500 yard freestyle before her career was cut short after being banned from competing in women's swimming events. Even without the bans, Lia Thomas faced lots of targeted harassment towards her and her college, and recently had her school records she worked so hard for stripped from her.

In September 2024, Brooke Slusser had outed her teammate on the San Jose State University women's volleyball team as being transgender to "protect women against males in women's sports."

This caused a lot of controversy for the team, resulting in 7 teams boycotting playing their team, and giving them 7 free wins to their 14-7 season. The trans athlete had previously competed on the team for 2 years with there being no issue and SJSU's team and record is nothing extraordinary. It was only when she was outed by her teammate that it became an issue.

Outing someone is one of the worst things you can do to a

trans person, it is robbing them of their humanity, preventing them from coming out to people on their own terms, and potentially puts them in a lot of danger, which happened not only to the trans player, but also to the many other players and coaches on the team who became targets of harassment online and protests outside of their games. Many of the schools who had forfeited against them also put out statements to why they did, where



they publicly called the trans athlete a male, and news sources use her full name, making her a target for even more harassment.

This is not about protecting women's sports, many of these people do not even care about women's sports to begin with, we are just targeted because we are such a small minority of the population. It just makes women's sports a more dangerous place when harassment like this is normalized. Reading through comments made about trans female athletes is absolutely sickening, and it saddens me how little support there is for this issue even from "progressive" people.

Sports are not fair at the top level. The best athletes all have genetic differences from regular people that help them excel at their sport. Literally just look at Michael Phelps. His body was made to be the best swimmer in the world and nothing else, with his incredibly large wingspan, height, and his body producing less lactic acid than normal. Iten, Kenya, a city of only 42,000 people, has produced so many of the greatest long distance runners because of its high elevation and transport on foot being so common, encouraging a lot of running. All sports' top athletes have specific builds that help them excel at their sports. No matter how hard I tried I could've never been one of the best basketball players because I'm 5'8.

When I started rowing my first year on varsity it immediately became clear I was one of the worst on the team. I was a 5'8 boy in a sport where even the best women are at least 5'10. I placed in the bottom of almost every single race until I finally won one at the end of that year, in a scholastic teams only race. I continued to put in much more effort than others to improve and I was still worse than people on my team who, even those who had a whole year less experience than me.

Ideally sports would be fair but they aren't. I was on a school team of around 30-40 people combined for the men's and women's varsity and novice teams, having to race against private teams of 200+ athletes from all over that received much more funding and had elite level coaches and athletes (although I had a gold medalist olympian as a coach Junior year :p shout out to Erin Cafaro <3). Sports try to be fair but they can't ever be completely fair. Allowing the few publically trans women that do play sports to compete with other women will not ruin the competitive integrity of the sport or make them any less fair than they already are. It will only ensure equality and greater acceptance for transgender people everywhere which creates a safer environment for everybody.

The argument against excluding transgender women in women's sports is rooted in so much misogyny, believing that the average athletic adult male could walk on to any professional women's sports team and immediately dominate with little experience. It completely disregards the hours and hours of daily training across many years that these women have put into their sport and minimizes the accomplishments made by these incredible athletes.

Trans female athletes are not even allowed to compete in professional sports without lowered testosterone levels for at least a year before competing. This regulation on testosterone levels in women has resulted in attacks on many female athletes of color. Athletes like Christine Mboma, Beatrice Masilingi, Caster Semenya, Dutee Chand, and countless others have all been discriminated against for having various androgen disorders like hyperandrogenism by athletic committees and spectators. Rules in place have disqualified these women from competing or have forced them to medically reduce their natural hormone levels to compete.

On top of the previously mentioned athletes, Lin

Yu-ting and Imane Khelif were the subjects of attacks by transphobes during the 2024 Olympics as they were both accused of being transgender women. It's very common for women of color to face allegations of being transgender because our conceptions of what a "man" or "woman" are is based on white European features and standards, and a woman that is not valued as conventionally attractive is often seen as masculine through the gaze of western society. Transphobia is not just transphobia, it is racism, sexism, homophobia, and ableism too. These attacks take away from the incredible accomplishments by these women who deserve so much praise, and attention for their accomplishments, not harassment for something that isn't even true.

A lot of trans "allies" do not support trans people. You cannot support trans people but be against trans women competing in women's sports or being in women's spaces. On top of the obvious things, such as blatantly misgendering us, if you use us as gotchas, use they/them pronouns on us when we don't use them, are against neo-pronouns, aren't supportive of gender identities outside of male, female, and non-binary or you uphold gender norms on others at all, misgender people because they're a bad person, are a bio-essentialist; believing behavior of men and women is inherent to their gender, say a trans person looks more like a man or a woman than a transphobe, saying transphobes are secretly attracted to us, tell someone a person is trans for them (without their permission), treat trans people who don't pass any differently from those that do, focus on the fact that transphobia hurts cis people more than the harm it causes trans people, center your feminism around having a uterus, continually platform or support transphobes, infantilize us, or fetishize us, you aren't a good ally as you think you are. Extra emphasis on the fetishization part btw. Your allyship extends to all trans people or it extends to nobody. Don't equate being gay to liking dick, being a lesbian to liking pussy, etc. or trans women as just women with dicks. And stop using "AMAB" and "AFAB" too. I almost never see those terms being used in a way that is not at least slightly transphobic or exclusionary to trans people.

There is no "I support Trans people but..." you need to have unconditional support of us no matter what, just using our correct name and pronouns is never enough. Let transgender people play in the sports they want to, let trans kids be kids and not have to worry about their rights being taken away from them or be forced into spaces they are not comfortable in. Supporting trans people right now is so important as the republican party is trying to eradicate our very existence and the democratic party can't even pretend to care about us anymore.

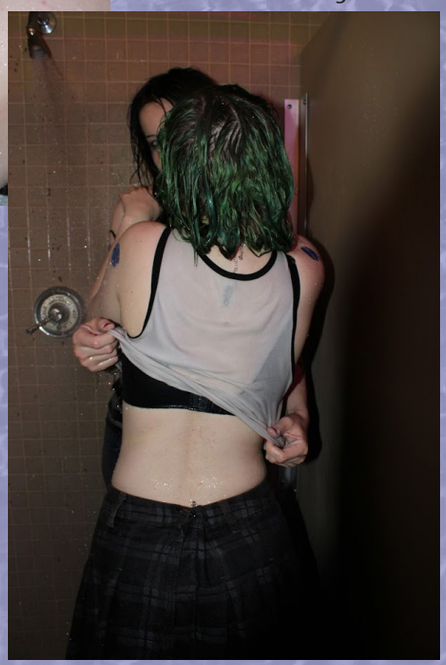
I fear for all of my trans siblings who live in states that are actively having their rights taken away, all the trans sex workers who are forced into this line of work and have to sell their body to support their transition because it's more difficult to get hired as a trans person, while facing higher rates of sexual assault and violence, all the trans people unable to start their transition due to social or financial circumstances, all the trans people who have been murdered or have commit suicide before they can live out their full lives, all the trans people in places where being transgender is illegal or access to gender affirming care is illegal or limited, trans people who hold identities that put them in even more danger and discrimination, those that have been forced to detransition, trans people who have lost family and friends because of their transition, all the trans children being forced to go through a puberty that does not align with the one they desire, and trans people of color especially who have higher rates of experiencing all of these things than their white counterparts. I fear for the future of all trans people. Trans people everywhere I love you, and never stop being you.

Fear mongering about issues like trans women in sports or in women's bathrooms is exactly what has led to the position trans people are in in the US right now. These issues are made to seem much larger than they really are to give justification to dehumanize us, we're such a small portion of the population which makes targeting us so easy. We're being blamed for so many of the world's problems, othered, dehumanized, and disrespected so blatantly. We're supposed to act like living in a society where so much of the population wants us dead is normal. We're supposed to be content with our "resistance" party who gave up on us because it protects their safety, and lost twice to one of the most awful people alive in the most slam dunk elections ever. Taking away our rights is not going to stop at banning us from women's sports or women's bathrooms, they're not stopping until we're all eradicated from society.

# Community Left Behind: Being Queer in Idaho

*Written by Finn*
*Photos by*
*Alexa Cruz Abarca*

Idaho's state capitol, Boise, hosts Pride every September. At first, Boise's Queer celebration was held in secret with small picnics in local parks. But now, Boise Pride has been officially established since 1989, coming up on its 36th anniversary next fall. As is all too common in Idaho, though, the presence—let alone celebration—of a marginalized community brings an appalling amount of controversy. A place to celebrate queer and trans beauty is quickly blemished by online threats of gun violence and protestors standing at the entrance, holding signs with the supposed word of god that accuse us of blasphemy. It's a stark reminder that every Pride celebration is a protest.



Police officers stand to the right of the entrance, guns loaded in their holsters. However, as most do, the police department proves questionable in its efficacy and morals. Not only does the Boise Police Department have many historical incidents of oppression against POC and LGBTQ+ people, a recent incident at Boise Pride in 2022 ended with a protester harassing LGBTQ+ people being sent home while a festival security officer was arrested and charged with Battery for removing him—something the police refused to do after being asked for assistance. The incident led to a judge finding the private security officer not guilty and a civil lawsuit against Boise Police Department for Negligence, which was also later dismissed. In a community under as much threat as Idaho's, the question rises: who would the police truly help should something happen? While they claim to be there to support and protect the LGBTQ+ community, many past actions have proved their discrimination towards marginalized groups. It clearly rings true that any Pride event in the state requires some form of protection, but the police's biases, especially when in the political climate Idaho has, can easily come into play. When protestors and queer people see the cops standing by the entrance—which group then feels safer?

Across the street from where the officers stand, a priest is propped up with a microphone and speaker, shouting bible verses at attendees of Pride. In the middle sits a table offering free coffee from a local cafe if you would consider accepting the lord into your life and repenting for all your gay sins.

Many protestors have shown up for multiple years. They hand out tiny bibles and fake money with irrelevant scriptures and regurgitated accusations. They all have the same claims, points, and supposed empathetic feelings for the propaganda the LGBTQ+ community has fallen victim to. I'm loved despite my sins, I will be kept in their prayers, I can still be saved, being gay is the wrong choice, it's gross, it's unnatural, it doesn't make sense.

According to them, they're giving us an opportunity to be saved. All we need to do is change everything about ourselves, down to our fundamental cores. And yet, the protestors that show up at Pride only represent an incredibly minute amount of the threat faced by LGBTQ+ Idahoans daily.

While historically, anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric has specifically targeted and demonized queer individuals, we've seen a violent shift towards the discrimination of trans individuals in recent years. In Idaho, state-wide laws are proposed and passed daily that prevent trans individuals from using their correct bathroom, pronouns, or names. LGBTQ+ doctors and those that perform or support gender-affirming care or abortions are no longer welcome in the state, and, realistically, never truly were. This not only affects those working in healthcare, but also the queer

and AFAB
people who no longer have the care they need.

Accessing gender-affirming care, especially as a minor, within the state is incredibly difficult, and proves near impossible if the minor is not out or with accepting parents. Additionally, a severe and overlooked bullying problem is present and targets statewide LGBTQ+ youth. In Idaho, libraries and schools can be sued for controversial content deemed as unfit for minors.

As usual, this is typically LGBTQ+ content, but extends as far as erasing the United States' racist history and prevents teachers from covering these topics (like critical race theory), as well. Even after four months, a teacher in Meridian, Idaho, which is right next to Boise, is still fighting to keep a sign saying, "All are welcome," up in her classroom after being asked to remove it due to the multiracial hands demonstrating political implications and being too similar to DEI narratives.

Additionally, all educational staff are legally allowed to deadname minors, and a fight back only proves accessible to those with accepting parents. Idaho's legislature actively fights all DEI efforts within education. State universities like the University of Idaho and Boise State University have shut down DEI centers in response to the state legislature. In a state that already discriminates against minorities, the closure of DEI centers affects marginalized groups of all kinds—especially people of color—that are facing a further lack of protection, resources, and care. This is the reality of the Republican state: there is no safe haven, even in our most liberal town, Boise. Bullying, harassment, lack of resources, racism, hate crimes, police brutality, suicide; the list goes on.

The reality of Idaho is greatly concerning. The Idahoans previously terrified are only more fearful after Trump's election, and the youth are facing the worst of it. While some want to stay in Idaho, many who have hopes of relocating are unable to do so. Despite these facts, when people outside of the state think of Idaho, they tend to believe that it doesn't matter because nobody lives there. In reality, over two million people stare down the barrel of these extreme laws. Similarly, while most people throughout the United States have a negative impression of Idaho, they don't understand the upsetting reality of living in the far-right state.

It can prove incredibly dangerous to be queer in Idaho, and many stay closted to be safe. The voices of so many amazing people are silenced due to these laws and the unsafe reality of living there—and the lack of coverage on it only further silences them. As the focus in mainstream media mainly focuses on anti-trans policies in Texas and Florida, trans and queer people in Idaho face a crisis invisible to most of the United States.

This trend of ignorance is especially alarming when Idaho has functioned as a 'Ground Zero,' or testing ground, for other states' oppressive laws. Idaho served this role especially aggressively in the overturning of Roe v. Wade and their subsequent abortion policies still in effect today. Another relevant example is Idaho's House Bill 500, which made trans people ineligible for publicly funded sports then spread to 30 other state houses, eventually making it to the federal level in HR 734. In 2024, Idaho's House Bill 538, which banned public education and government facilities from requiring proper pronoun usage, inspired Tennessee's HB 1262 enforcing the same thing in 2025.

Additionally, Donald Trump has many connections to Idahoan organizations and politicians. One example is Bart Davis, a longtime Idaho politician and ex-senator who was just nominated by Trump to reappoint his position as Idaho's State Attorney. Another is Pete Hegseth, the current United States Secretary of Defense and Trumpie lap dog who heavily supports a Christian Nationalist Church based in Moscow, Idaho. Despite the size of Idaho, its influence within the U.S.' political sphere should not be understated. The power of Idaho's government is precisely why we've forgotten about the marginalized communities residing there.

But, despite the oppressive nature of Idaho's government, many, including me, love the state. I can admit that my love for Idaho may be due to nostalgia and homesickness, but, while Eugene has a strong queer population, Boise's queer community gave me a level of love and generosity that Eugene lacks. Through aversion and oppression, though the circumstances are clearly unfortunate, you find incredibly close communities. Idaho's queers are fighting everyday, yet their strength is deeply unrecognized.

When our families and lawmakers don't show up, the community does. When we face another attempt to oppress us, the community fights back. Boise represents the potential with a remarkable amount of character and history, including queer history that is, once again, forgotten. Yet, to mutter any love for Idaho sours my mouth due

to its political landscape. The state's legislature has shown that Idahoan queers love Idaho much more than it loves us. But, there is hope: we will always be here.

When I talked to some of the Idahoan LGBTQ+ community members I know, I found many views reflecting fear for and love of the Idaho queer community.

One of them is Moss, a transmasc Liberal Arts student in Idaho who's incredibly passionate about Boise's queer history and staying in the state to get it to a place they can be proud of. They shared that they feel Idaho politics are much worse than people realize and agree that Trump's election proves devastating for Idahoans.

Victoria, a lesbian in Idaho, also feels that Trump's second election has created fear over her queerness that she's never felt before. Victoria attends college as an English major at the University of Idaho, one of a few colleges that removed DEI centers. She highlighted that while she's felt some of the effects of the DEI removal, she's seen POC peers have many more harmful effects from the legislature. While Victoria has eventual hopes of moving out of Idaho, she is determined to fight for her community and others for as long as she remains.

T is another resident of Idaho who described many positive experiences at Pride and with the Idaho queer community. Every person I talked to had positive experiences at Pride, expressing their love for a multitude of things about it. While queer Idahoans have a complex relationship with the state because of its politics, there are many beautiful and overlooked aspects of Idaho and the queer community there.

For many Idahoans, Pride proves as the one time they are able to be out and careless. Over Boise Pride weekend, along with the slurry of traffic noises and protestors yelling, you hear performers and drag queens speaking, with the local queer community loudly celebrating in response. The speakers shake the ground surrounding the stage, blasting any Top 40 song that the average white twink revels in. Tens of thousands of attendees have shown up in recent years. At night, rainbow fireworks light the sky in front of the Idaho capitol building. Booths offer free contraceptives, necessities, lists of resources, merch, and hugs.

Last year, the city of Nampa, a town slightly outside Boise, was able to host its own Pride festival with an outpour of support. The events bring local drag, guest stars, marches, and highlights the community. It's an incredible show of the community's love for one another.

When a Pride protestor in Idaho asked me, "If you had to give up 'two seconds' of your overall life to repent and discontinue sinning [I.E. gay sex] for the guarantee of heavenly joy, would you do it?" I told him no, the answer was obvious to me. Queer joy is the greatest joy I've ever encountered. To me, being trans or queer is joy. All of the protestors' points forgo the glory queerness provides, I don't want to be saved. Despite what I've faced due to my identity, I wouldn't give any of it up for a chance at salvation or 'normalcy.' Fuck normalcy. Fuck salvation. We're queer, and we're here in god damned Idaho.

We must recognize and fight for the state's minorities, god forbid the drivers with "blue girl, red state" stickers be our only hope for protection. When the realities of the United States are talked about in the West Coast, the topic often focuses on their fears of the worst to come in the South, meanwhile treacherous conditions are actively being faced one state over.

While activism is important for every queer facing adversity within the U.S., we have to make sure we're actually focusing on every queer, not just the ones in larger states. When we dismiss Idaho because of its size or reputation, we also erase a warm, generous, unwavering community of queers, trans people, and POC that experience discrimination on a regular basis due to the state's political status. If we continue this pattern, we choose to silence and abandon them while prioritizing desirability or numbers over people. By lacking any education on Idaho's queer community and the threats faced, we empower the Republicans that drown out the community's voices. Don't become the monster; stay aware.

*Thank you for interviews from T, Moss, Victoria, and Jordan!*

*References on Website*

# The True American Revolution: That of the American Slave

*Written by J. Valentine Bentz*
*Illustrated by Alexa Cruz Abarca*

Closing his magisterial work Black Reconstruction, W.E.B. DuBois reflects on the story of the American Slave: "The most magnificent drama in the last thousand years of human history is the transportation of ten million human beings out of the dark beauty of their mother continent into the new-found Eldorado of the West. They descended into Hell; and in the third century they arose from the dead, in the finest effort to achieve democracy for the working millions which this world had ever seen" (727). Significant to understanding this story as Du Bois does is the employment of a Marxist lens to see that the enslaved were not 'freed' by their oppressors during the civil war – rather they emancipated themselves in response to the intolerable conditions of slavery. Nearly a century earlier, as the United States broke away from the tyrannical English Monarchy in the well-known American tale, the Founding Fathers ironically became leaders of "the only nation in history whose best and brightest minds first led a revolution from colonialism in the name of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all men, and then built a contradiction into their society by explicitly denying human dignity to a quarter of the population they aspired to govern," as James and Grace Lee Boggs posit in Revolution and Evolution in the 20th Century (156).

Given this, what does it mean that the actions of the Founding Fathers are memorialized as heading the 'American Revolution,' while the story of the slaves' self-emancipation is rarely told, and if so, characterized by a uniquely American shame? Starting from here, this paper will contend that the slaves freeing themselves constitutes the true American Revolution, as it is what legitimately brought democracy—perhaps our nation's fondest pillar—to the United States. In section one, I establish one way that revolution can be quantified, primarily utilizing the works of James and Grace Lee Boggs. I will then map this concept over the Slaves' self-emancipation, using Du Bois' work in Black Reconstruction to constitute it as such a revolution. In section two, I turn to how this revolution was cut short by the backlash of the Redemption era, ultimately giving rise to the total sabotage of Reconstruction. I conclude with implications for the present day in which we find ourselves facing rising fascism in the US, while also attempting to identify the next step in the genealogy of struggle set in motion by the Revolution of American Slave.

*On Revolution, and that of The Black Worker (American Slave)*

In order to determine what we call the true American Revolution, we must first define for ourselves what revolution is. Grace and James Lee Boggs' Revolution and Evolution in the 20th Century offers a an analysis of qualifying factors that can indicate when a period of history is in fact a revolution. For them, a revolution is a specific method in which human evolution is advanced, specifically on the basis that the advancement "expands and enriches human identity" (22). Rather than an isolated or singular event predicated on spontaneity, such as a rebellion or revolt, revolution is a sustained, protracted struggle, firmly connected to the rest of history. It is "a phase in the long evolutionary process of man/woman [which] initiates a new plateau, a new threshold on which human beings can continue to develop…" (19). In times where evolution has been stalled, such as during the rule of an oppressive regime, revolution can restart it through an intentional projection of the future in which "a more human human being, i.e., a human being who is more advanced in the specific qualities which only human beings have—creativity, consciousness, and self-consciousness, a sense of political and social responsibility" (19) is able to exist. Overall, revolution most fundamentally gives people the ability to "renew and enlarge their own humanity" (22), ushering in a "profoundly new, profoundly original beginning" (19) for those who partake in it. Further, a revolution is not done by accident or through a stroke of luck, but through a consciousness of what one is doing; the Boggses emphasize that "a conscious struggle, that is, a struggle governed by conscious values, conscious goals,

conscious programs and conscious persons, is required" (19). In other words, revolutionary actors, or an oppressed group, must envision the future and attempt to create it.

In sum, the Boggses argue that for a period to be considered a revolution, it must (1) expand and enrich human identity, (2) initiate a profoundly new historic threshold, and (3) be carried out by those with a revolutionary consciousness, set on shaping the new future at hand (where 1 + 2 have been achieved). These preconditions are intentionally broad, leaving room for the uniqueness of each revolution, understanding that they all unfold under very specific conditions that are developed over a number of years, at a "particular time and in a particular historical period, and which, therefore, cannot possibly be repeated at another time in another place" (24).

How then, can we see these preconditions fulfilled in the case of the American Slave? In the more than 150 years since their emancipation, they have been popularly characterized as passive agents, liberated by the Emancipation Proclamation and the Union Army, both which receive moral credit for finally ending the institution of slavery. Even in 1935, Du Bois was responding to this misrepresentation by establishing the existence of a Black Revolutionary Consciousness in Black Reconstruction – using a Marxist lens to better understand how the enslaved saw their own condition. As Marx first conceived that industrial workers would acquire a consciousness capable of overthrowing capitalism through becoming alienated from their labor and frustrated with their working conditions, Du Bois argues that it is crucial to consider the labor conditions of the Black Slave. Cedric Robinson cements this in Black Marxism, emphasizing that "it was not as slaves that one could come to an understanding of the significance [Black people] had for American development. It was as labor" (pg. 199).

In this line, Du Bois argues that the Slave was both self-aware as a slave and as a worker, arguing that they were not only alienated from themselves but also alienated from their labor; they were oppressed both on the conditions of their race and class. Thus 'The Black Worker' (the title of the opening chapter of Black Reconstruction) always understood their working conditions to be horrid, being the conditions of slavery. As workers, they also understood the power of their labor, which according to Du Bois was the "foundation stone not only of the Southern social structure, but of Northern manufacture and commerce, of the English factory system, of European commerce, of buying and selling on a world-wide scale..." (5).

On this basis, Du Bois goes on to argue that the enslaved undertook a 'General Strike' (the namesake of chapter four) in which they consciously rebelled against the conditions of their work by withholding their labor: "The slave entered upon a general strike against slavery by the same methods that he had used during the period of the fugitive slave... and it was also true that this withdrawal and bestowal of his labor decided the war" (57). As the Civil War progressed, Slaves—in coordinated efforts—refused their work, escaped from plantations and offered their labor in service to the Union Army as it reached the Confederate States. By 'freeing' to Union camps, they weakened the Confederacy's ability to continue the war by crippling its labor force, military support, and economic stability:

Yet, these slaves had enormous power in their hands. Simply by stopping work,
they could threaten the Confederacy with starvation. By walking into the Federal
camps, they showed to doubting Northerners the easy possibility of using them as
workers and as servants, as farmers, and as spies, and finally, as fighting soldiers. And not only using them thus, but by the same gesture, depriving their enemies of their use
in just these fields. It was the fugitive slave who made the slaveholders face the
alternative of surrendering to the North, or to the Negroes. (121)

Thus, the General Strike was a direct assault on slavery, the plantation economy, and the Confederacy itself. As Du Bois argues in chapter five (The Coming of the Lord), the North would not have won the war if the more than 200,000 enslaved did not free themselves and support the Union. Moreover, it was not until the North had an existential decision to make— allow Black people to fight and to take a moral stand against slavery or lose the war – that the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, leading to a turn in the war for the Union and steps towards Reconstruction for the whole nation.

In total, the Black Worker was in control of their destiny as a united revolutionary proletariat that freed themselves from their bondage, first as striking workers, and then as soldiers fighting for the union. As active participants in their liberation, or as Du Bois says, the "center of the stage" (ch 4, p. 57), the Slaves used the opportunity of the Nation's miscalculation (assuming the enslaved were too uncivilized to take up any such action) to make the Civil War a moment of their own revolution. Their newfound freedom surely meant the expansion of human identity, as Slaves finally became human. They transformed themselves from sub-human (slave) to having autonomy over their own social, economic, and political lives (free), even if freedom was not as totalizing as it was for whites. Obviously, the denial of Black Humanity (the Negro Problem) was not wholly subdued by emancipation, yet it marked a profoundly new beginning—the Black Worker had made themselves free in the same land where they had been made a slave.

What did this free-

dom, and new beginning, mean for the nation as a whole? The aftermath of the Constitution Convention in 1787 revealed and polarized real contradictions within the Founding Fathers, namely the divide between the North and South over what was to be done about slavery. And yet, "In the interest of unity, [they] covered up the contradictions... thereby laying the groundwork for the Civil War" (156) as the Boggses note. Nearly a century later as this war raged on, Lincoln similarly sought unity at all costs. "He made no effort to appeal to an enlarged sense of human identity among those on both sides, to urge them to recognize the role which whites had played in bringing blacks to this country by force and hence their responsibility of developing a new society in which everyone could play an equal role" (162). Therefore, it was ultimately the Founding Fathers', and later, the Union's, failure to truly provide democracy that required a revolution by the slave to restart the evolution of the country. Through striking, freeing, and fighting, the enslaved lifted the grand contradiction cemented in our Nation's framing: that all men were created equal and yet some were destined to be slaves. Similarly, Du Bois proclaimed that freedom being won meant the nation could finally be cleansed: "At last democracy was to be justified of its own children. The nation was to be purged of continual sin-not indeed all of its own doing-due partly to its inheritance; and yet a sin, a negation that gave the world the right to sneer at the pretensions of this republic. At last there could really be a free commonwealth of freemen." (125-126).

*On Counter Revolution and White Backlash*

"The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery," – WEB Du Bois in Black Reconstruction (215)

Reconstruction saw the nation attempting to stitch itself back together as Black people began to take full advantage of their newly won civil liberties. Freedom rang powerfully. After generations of being owned, former slaves and their children were finally able to participate in the American promise of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Southern Reconstruction governments, many run by Black elected majorities, established institutions of free and public education and championed progressive legislative reforms. The South experienced an economic revolution, with the formerly enslaved working the land for themselves and acquiring capital through business. And yet one can recognize, as Du Bois did, that the easing of the contradiction perhaps only clarified the true nature of the United States: the nation's democracy and opportunities were still predicated on the subjugation and oppression of Black people. This true nature was no more strongly on display than during what followed the "brief moment in the sun" – backlash strong enough to move the freed "back again toward slavery" (215).

For Du Bois, this backlash had a common root throughout the nation: shame. "The South was ashamed because it fought to perpetuate human slavery. The North was ashamed because it had to call in the black men to save the Union, abolish slavery and establish democracy" (711). Whites, still in hegemonic control and the superior position of the American racial caste, violently aimed their shame right back at those who had, just a moment earlier, delivered the country out of slavery and into the future. The Boggses are once again useful here, helping us to understand that while "The revolution creates the future; the counter-revolution seeks to maintain the present or restore the past. The counter-revolution is invariably anti-historical. It narrows and limits human beings..." (22). This anti-historical movement can be seen strikingly through the ideology of 'Redemption' that was commonplace (especially in the South) during Reconstruction.

Many 'Redeemers' were members of militia and/or terrorist groups that were established in the wake of emancipation, such as the Ku Klux Klan (founded 1865, only eight months after the conclusion of the Civil War), The White League (founded 1874), and Knights of the White Camellia (founded 1867). Though there were distinctions between each group's make up and tactics, all shared a similar ideology of Redemption: that a return to the 'Old Order' of slavery and totalizing white supremacy was necessary, and it was to be achieved through the forced removal of all legal, political, and economic rights of Black people. In that line, many terrorized and killed Blacks and assassinated pro-Reconstruction politicians. They were also anti-carpetbagger, often threatening and enacting violence on Northern businesspeople who attempted to take advantage of economic opportunities in the South.

It is important to emphasize the political nature of this terror: these groups explicitly carried out violence to stop Black people from voting and organizing politically, effectively rolling back the wins of Black elected officials. In one instance, during the presidential election of 1868, the KKK entered an area of Louisiana with a considerable Republican majority and "killed and wounded over 200 Republicans, hunting and chasing them for two days and nights through fields and swamps" (681). They forced the locale to vote Democrat or be killed, silencing the vote of Black labor and capturing the previously progressive government.

Redemptive political attacks during Reconstruction were not only extra-legal, but found within legal and political institutions themselves. The Supreme Court's makeup changed from 1872-74, most notably with the addition of two railroad and corporation lawyers supported by Northern big business. After their appointment, the court's majority was able to reassert its judicial power to stop the Northern federal mandate that democracy should exist in

the South. This included the attempted reversals of the 14th and 15th Amendments, rendering that the "The 15th Amendment to the Constitution does not confer the right of suffrage…The right to vote in the States comes from the States" (691). While this decision did not erase the Amendment from the Constitution, it left it up to the States on how the right to vote in each of their jurisdictions would be granted, essentially allowing them to discriminate on the basis of race. As Du Bois recounted, it was "thus that finance and the power of wealth accomplished through the Supreme Court what it had not been able to do successfully through Congress" (691) – beat back the central political gains made by Blacks during the whole of the era. In culmination with many other supremacist tactics, the actions of white terrorist groups and the weaponizing of government institutions reinforced the anti-black and anti-liberal white backlash, leading to the sabotage and sharp ending of Reconstruction.

*On Abolition, and Implications for our Present*

Since the sabotage, the forward movement and backwards again pattern which Du Bois alluded to has plagued the realization of racial equality in America. Beyond the obvious linguistic link of 'Redemption' to the movement of 'Make America Great Again,' (MAGA), the latter can be seen as reincarnating the need for whiteness to respond to and negate Black progress. Journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates traces this in regard to President Donald Trump, who "truly is something new—the first president whose entire political existence hinges on the fact of a black president. And so it will not suffice to say that Trump is a white man like all the others who rose to become president. He must be called by his rightful honorific—America's first white president" (76). Coates argues that being the first (and only) member of the office to follow a black president (Barack Obama), Trump's existence is not merely attributable to whiteness, it is the embodiment of its besieging nature. For he "made the negation of Obama's legacy the foundation of his own" as "it seems the face of Obama, the fact of a black president, insulted him personally… this too is whiteness" (76). As Trump sets up to resume office in early 2025, one can only assume his tenure as President will once again equate to the further erasure of Black forward movement, and amnesia from any history of America that is subjected to a theory of revolutionary change.

What behooves us to take this threat seriously, and to develop an understanding of our nation's revolutionary history? While the concession can be made that the Revolution of 1776 did play some role in the broad evolution of humanity, it should be seen in a dialectical relationship with the Revolution of the American Slave. It can be argued that the Founding Fathers' actions simply brought whiteness to America, reproducing the Eurocentric colonial domination they sought to escape. This rapidly accelerated an already ongoing genocide of the nation's indigenous peoples, and wholly denied human rights to the worker (slave) who built their society. It is this worker – the black worker – whose revolution represents the seldom attempted rescue of our nation from white supremacy. Their actions were truly the embodiment of an oppressed class strategically maneuvering and fighting back at the hegemonic, domineering systems. And in doing so at the perfect time, they were able to break a sharp set of defenses and liberate themselves into the future. However, the same forces that the enslaved fought are still very existent, strong, and pervasive today. The institution of slavery may no longer exist on Southern plantations, but it is alive in the prison industrial complex. Despite ongoing struggle against it, anti-black police violence persists in every major city. Bringing into the frame our rapidly deteriorating global climate and the intensification of racial capitalism, one could imagine that the future our nation is creating may be akin to self-annihilation.

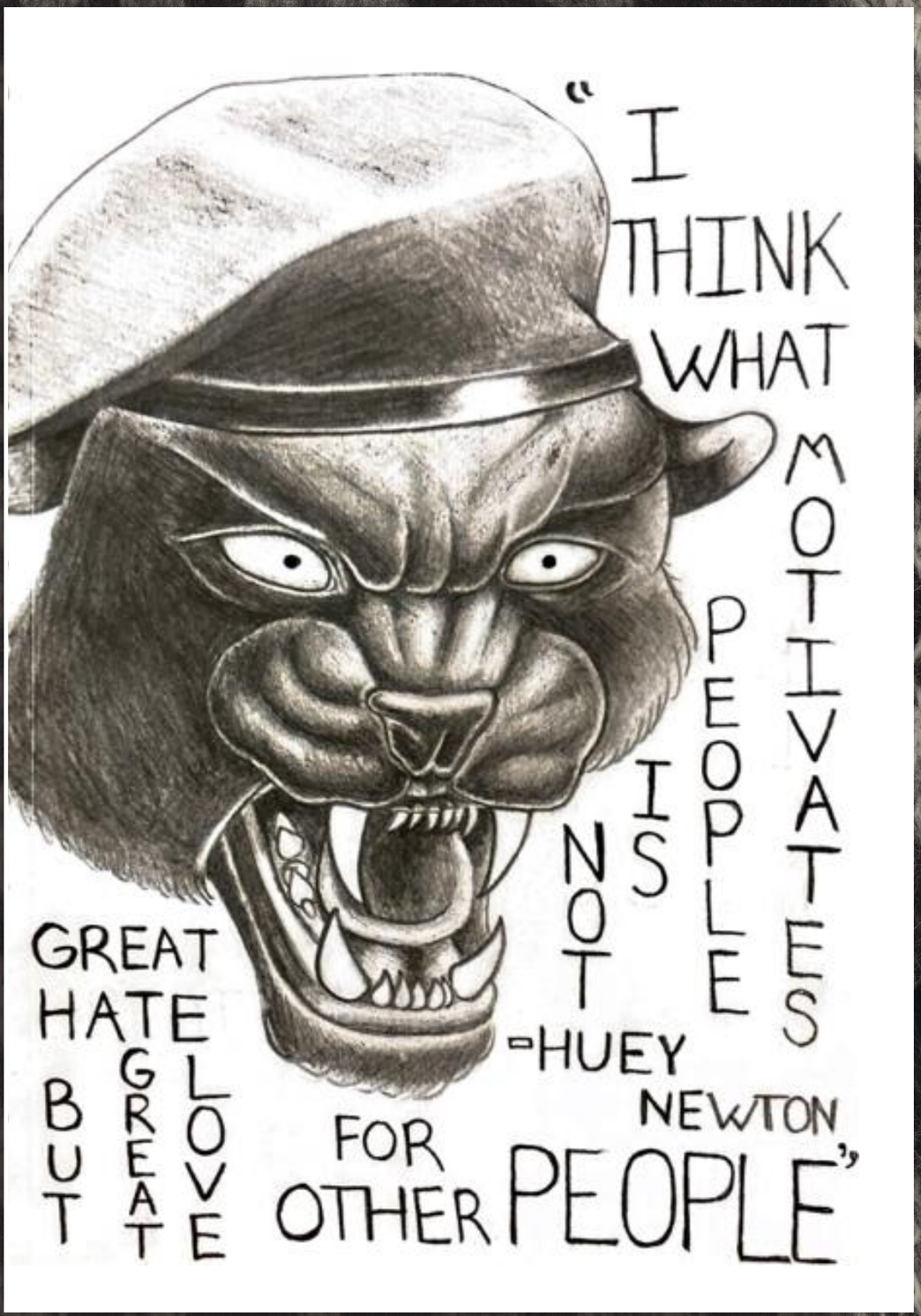
So how shall we respond? First, we must see our principled struggles, including past American Revolutions, as "situated on a continuous line between past and future" (19) as James and Grace Lee Boggs call us to do. Scholars Angela Davis, Gina Dent, Erica R. Meiners, and Beth E. Richie show us an example of this by seeing struggles around incarceration "as on a continuum with racial slavery rather than belonging to a new and separate era of freedom" (58), in Abolition. Feminism. Now. (2022). Further, we must consider an overall challenge of Du Bois from Black Reconstruction: to consider if it is enough to simply release people from their chains, or if a totalizing American Revolution must also include abolishing the existing political and economic frameworks that required slavery in the first place. This can be seen, as Davis and others remind us, through embracing the rich activist tradition of abolition: reimagining and (re)creating a society where the root causes which give rise to the oppression we face simply no longer exist. We must build a world where slavery is not just defeated, but no longer possible.

In a talk delivered at the University of Oregon in March of 2024, Davis touched on the incredible weight of the 2020 Black Lives Matter rebellions. Near the end of her three-hour address, she challenged the audience: "How do we know we are not still in that moment?" We can make the choice inside ourselves to extend it by pursuing another protracted struggle of radical Reconstruction, or as the Boggses would say – another sustained American Revolution. In doing so, we must prefigure a collective future that will wholly rid the grand contradiction not just from our society, but from our American blood as well.

*References on Website*

# Shut Up and Entertain Us

*Written and illustrated by Antonia Flowers*




During my time in the Pacific Northwest, I have noticed that there are very few minorities, yet many consume minority culture. If I had a dollar for every time I have heard white kids singing along to Not Like Us, I would have enough money to pay off my student loans. So then why is it that so many minorities feel marginalized, excluded, and discriminated against while here at the UO, despite the fact that our culture is always being put on display? And to answer that question, I am first going to dive into some American history. Particularly the position of Black people in the entertainment industry.

In 1830, a man named Thomas D. Rice smeared shoe polish on his face, put on an outfit, and began to mimic the white idea of Blackness through song and dance, thus giving birth to the minstrel show. The shows were a way to portray African Americans through caricatures justifying the actions and beliefs of white Americans, and exploiting Black pain for entertainment. For those who had little to no interaction with African Americans, the shows would be practically the only exposure to Black people they had, leaving the audience thinking that the depictions were accurate portrayals, giving them little reason to see any issue in the systematic oppression around them. For those who owned or interacted with slaves, the shows justified their poor treatment of African Americans by building a popular culture/entertainment source around their oppression.

Later, in 1918, came the Harlem Renaissance. While this era gave birth to many greats like Zora Neale Hurston, Louis Armstrong, Aaron Douglas, and many more, it is also important to recognize the relationship between Black artists and white consumers. For instance, many know the name of the Cotton Club (a nightclub in the Harlem district of New York City) but do not mention the primarily white audience that was attending. It was a place where white people could go to sit amongst other white people and watch African Americans perform. In fact, African Americans were only permitted inside as waitresses or performers with very few exceptions.

This set a strict boundary, the entertainment and those who were entertained. The Cotton Club was a place with a plantation themed interior, produced racist imagery on menus, and enforced strict colorism on female performers. Langston Hughes, a poet, novelist, playwright, columnist, and social activist was also one of the few African Americans permitted to enter as a customer. He later denounced the club, describing it as "a Jim Crow club for gangsters and monied whites." elaborating that "strangers were given the best ringside tables to sit and stare at the Negro customers - like amusing animals in a zoo."

Today I feel that not much has changed. Many white Americans will consume African American media, music, and culture, while at the same time upholding racist ideologies and beliefs. If not upholding racist ideologies, popular media archetypes contribute to prejudice many hold towards African Americans. The previously stated people will try to maintain a racial separation between entertainment and the entertained. This can be seen in situations where white audiences will feel angered if they are not the intended audience of a performance. Such as, when Kendrick Lamar performed at the Super Bowl with a strong pro Black message; it was met with hostility from many, referring to it as a "DEI hire halftime show" or criticizing him for the "lack of diversity" within his performance.

I would like to point out that around 53% of players, not including those who are multiracial, are African American, with around 24% of players being white. That begs the question of why many Americans are angered that they are not the intended audience for just one out of the many shows that have been performed since the 1960's, despite the fact that they are the minority of the players of the field. When Kendrick Lamar directed his performance towards African Americans it broke the racial separation between the entertained and entertainers that many are trying very hard to uphold. This performance should be applauded not only for Lamar's artistic talent, but also for his political statement and the breaking of this barrier. Though, we should also not consider this progress, as the issue is still very present. To quote Malcolm X, "If you stick a knife nine inches into my back and pull it out three inches, that is not progress. Even if you pull it all the way out, that is not progress. Progress is healing the wound, and America hasn't even begun to pull out the knife."

The perception of African Americans as entertainment contributes to a strong prejudice many uphold. By separating the entertainment and the entertained to coincide with race, it also reinforces the stereotype that entertainment-(ex: sports, mass media, TV shows, etc.)- is the only field African Americans can exist inside. I strongly believe that if you were to ask a majority of the students attending the University of Oregon to name 5 Black people, they would most likely name 5 entertainers. While it is good to have such representation in the media, especially for Black youth, the issue has become that they are unable to name five Black scholars. Oftentimes the view of Black people through a white lens is solely of entertainment and ignores all of the other amazing contributions African Americans have made to our society, which not only perpetuates ignorance but also hurts African Americans.

When living within a white person's lens, it becomes incredibly difficult to see who you are as an individual and be true to yourself. If you are only viewed as entertainment, never encouraged in academics, entrepreneurship, trades, etc., it only becomes more difficult to find your passion. And even after stepping outside this lens others still wear it, causing them to mistreat you, judge you, withhold opportunities, and make assumptions that can lead to dire consequences. It is within the white lens in which many of us are marginalized, especially within the academic community. My hope for all of the minority readers is that they step into their own lens, find community and accomplish whatever they put their minds to. Though for all of the readers who were unable to name 5 African Americans who are not entertainers, I will give you 10, in no particular order.

1. Marie Van Brittan Brown (1922-1999): Co-Created the home security in 1966. Including a camera that could look out the peephole of a door, a monitor to view the footage, a speaker to communicate with those outside, and a button to call police.

2. Frederick McKinley Jones (1893-1961): This man is the reason you can have fresh produce from California and eat it in Washington. He invented the refrigerated truck in 1940.

3. Katherine Johnson (1918-2020): Her calculations of orbital mechanics were detrimental to the moon landing. She had over a 33 year long career at NASA.

4. Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960): a writer, folklorist, anthropologist, and documentary filmmaker. She has written a vast amount of literature including Their Eyes Were Watching God, How it Feels to be Colored Me, Dust Tracks on a Road, and Mules and Men, along with many more.

5. Robert Smalls (1839- 1915): A US politician who while enslaved during the civil war took command of a confederate ship along with 8 others on board (including his wife and children) and escaped. He then joined the union and was able to provide "shipping routes, mine locations, and the times that Confederate ships docked and departed" (Greg Timmons). I think everyone should look into this man and his story because it is incredible.

6. Crispus Attucks (1723-1770): The first man killed in the Boston Massacre. He was a whaler, sailor, and is regarded as the first man to die in The American Revolution.

7. Madam CJ Walker (1867-1919): Not only was she a social and political activist, she was also the first self made female millionaire in America, employing 40,000 people majority of whom were african american women.

8. Garret Morgan (1877-1963): Inventor of the stoplight and the gasmask. He is the reason you can safely drive through an intersection without colliding with the cars around you.

9. Shania Muhammad (2008-current): The youngest teacher in America. She graduated from the University of Oklahoma at 15 and now teaches a 3rd grade class.

10. Maurice Ashley (1966-current): A Jamaican American chess player who in 1999 earned the FIDE title of Grandmaster, the highest title a chess player can attain.

## Creativity as an Outlet to Liberation

*Written by Kyla Ryman*

The transformative medium of art has long been harnessed as a vital tool for personal growth, social change, and liberation. In my zine project, I explore art as a means of overcoming internalized oppression and inspiring individuals to reach their full potential outside the constraints of traditional Western mind frames. This creative work takes the viewer through the life cycle of a flower as a metaphor to describe the journey of self-expression and personal empowerment of an individual. This paper integrates the metaphor with theoretical underpinnings drawn from the writings of Karen D. Pyke, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Shira Hassan in illustrating the usefulness of creativity in dismantling internalized oppression toward collective liberation.

This project is relevant to me because I have firsthand experience with the healing and empowering effects of creative expression. As someone navigating the struggles of living within systems that fail to recognize the worth of individuals outside mainstream constructs, I have found that creativity provides a space to reconnect with myself and reclaim my essence. Through art, I have been able to explore and come to understand my inner thoughts, gifts, desires, and wounds. Coming to know yourself is a process of unfolding evolution, like a spiral, and to be in touch with this process amid a society full of contradictory noise is vital. In a world that often pressures individuals to conform to rigid expectations, creative expression allows me to access my unique identity, heal from trauma, challenge oppressive narratives, and feel interconnected. By creating this zine, I hope to show others that this space is accessible and can help them tap back into their inherent potential, overall I want to encourage those around me to wield their creative power as a tool for liberation.

### *Internalized Oppression and the Role of Creative Expression in Reclaiming Agency*

In her article "What is Internalized Racial Oppression and Why Don't We Study It? Acknowledging Racism's Hidden Injuries," Karen D. Pyke explores the complexities of internalized oppression and its role in perpetuating systemic racism. Pyke asserts that the dominant social narrative often promotes the false idea that marginalized groups can overcome oppression by assimilating into the structures of the dominant group. She writes, "The empty promise that the oppressed can escape their 'otherness' by shunning their difference lures them into supporting the very rules that define them into existence as the 'other'" (Pyke 557). In this way, what Pyke refers to as a "double bind" traps the oppressed into a self-rejecting cycle, in which their identity becomes bound up with the values of a system that marginalizes them.

Art, as I show in my zine project, acts as a medium through which these repressive internalized narratives can be confronted and dismantled. That creative expression can allow someone to reflect on and exorcise the damaging ideas that have been placed onto them, opening up a route toward personal liberation. In my project, this metaphor of flowers and their capacity for growth represents the possible transformation when individuals shed their internalized and debilitating beliefs. Emancipation can be pursued individually through the creation and expression of one's stories, perspectives, and abstract impressions, as opposed to supporting structures that demean their human worth.

### *Liberation as an Internal Process of Transformation*

Gloria Anzaldúa's "This Bridge We Call Home," emphasizes the role of internal transformation as a prerequisite for collective liberation. According to Anzaldúa, liberation is not strictly a political or external struggle but must first be undertaken within the individual. As she writes, "What you live through and the knowledge you infer from experience is subjective. Intuitive knowing, unmediated by mental constructs-what inner eye, heart, and gut tell you-is

the closest you come to direct knowledge (gnosis) of the world, and this experience of reality is partial too" (Anzaldúa, 542). The basis of liberation for Anzaldúa is to acknowledge and accept one's identity, which usually gets suppressed or distorted by society and its structures.

My zine project aligns with Anzaldúa's perspective by utilizing creative expression as a way for individuals to access their deeper truths outside of societal programming. Metaphorically the flower's blooming process is the unfolding of an individual's true potential when they break free from the mental constructs that limit awareness. Anzaldúa's emphasis on internal knowing highlights the importance of self-awareness and personal transformation in striving toward liberation. In these creative practices, individuals can develop this inner wisdom that further inspires a collective consciousness of empowerment and resistance against oppressive systems.

*Liberatory Harm Reduction and Art as a Healing Practice*

Shira Hassan's idea of liberatory harm reduction further underlines the role of creativity in healing and empowerment. In "Saving Our Own Lives: A Liberatory Practice of Harm Reduction," Hassan advocates for a non-judgmental way of supporting individuals who have been marginalized or criminalized because of behaviors considered stigmatized by society. Hassan writes, "We put our values into action using real-life strategies to reduce the negative health, legal, and social consequences that result from criminalized and stigmatized life experiences. Liberatory Harm Reduction is true self-determination and total body autonomy" (Hassan, 29). She builds on that idea with an understanding that this kind of creation of space lets individuals express themselves freely, without fear of judgment or coercion, thus allowing people to heal and reclaim their agency.

Art forms as expressive mediums, reflect principles of liberatory harm reduction since it gives the space to process experiences and trauma in individual ways. In my zine, the garden represents the community that supports and nurtures the voices and stories of individuals who have never felt allowed to speak. Like a garden full of flowers, all coexisting, creativity allows people to come together and to meet themselves and others where they are, without placing hard expectations or judgment. In this sense, art becomes an accessible tool for the healing, self-expressive, and liberatory values at the core of Hassan's framework of harm reduction.

*Overview*

The work of Pyke, Anzaldúa, and Hassan in their own ways contribute to understanding how art can be a tool for overcoming internalized oppression and fostering both personal and collective liberation. Pyke's discussion of the double bind of internalized oppression points out how creative expression is crucial in purging the debilitating narratives that hold the marginalized in their places in oppressive systems. Anzaldúa's emphasis on internal transformation as a precondition for liberation underscores the necessity of self-awareness and creative exploration as integral parts in shaping individuals that can hold the vision for a new way of embracing collective diversity. Finally, Hassan's concept of liberatory harm reduction places art as a healing tool for holding space and connecting individuals within their imperfections within a process of enabling autonomy.

*Conclusion*

The metaphor of the life cycle of flowers in my zine speaks to the growth, transformation, and collective healing that may emerge from embracing creativity. Art, in all forms, then becomes the method with which systems of oppression are deconstructed, personal resilience is nurtured, and the world is connected in a liberation-seeking manner. Drawing upon the work of Pyke, Anzaldúa, and Hassan, my project advances not only personal empowerment but also collective resistance and liberation that begins with a reclaimed self through expression.

*References on Website*

## I Found Blood On My Battle Dress

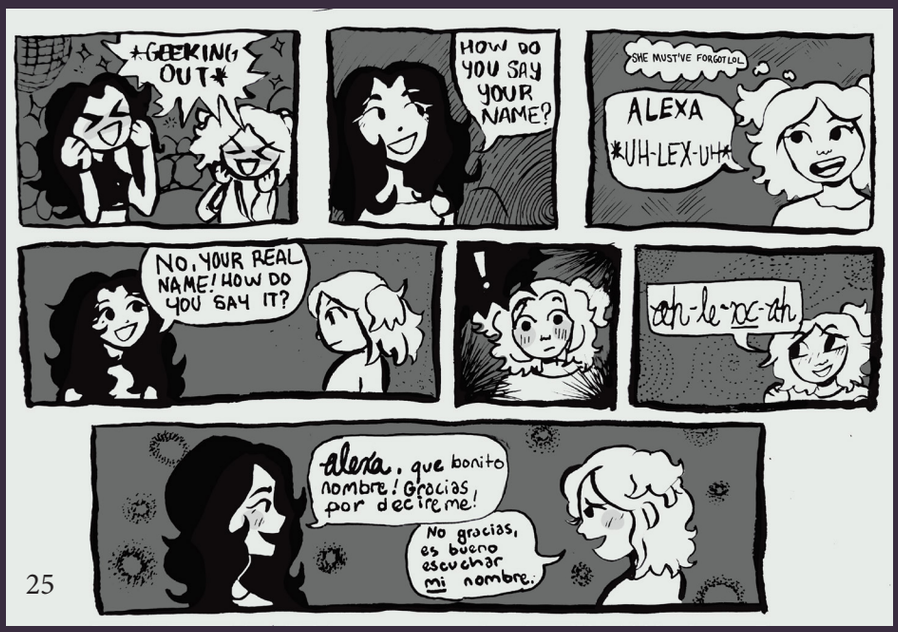
*Written by Zamboni*

Combat boots
feel loose on my ankles,
who'll feel, but me.
"We The People"
Are not. my. people.

A citizen's arrest for
your love
a stabbing for the
patch on my shoulder,
To have to
reap for thread
when I was taught
by the only maker of me
to sew

I won't
be hit, bulldozed,
clotheslined
but if
I swing high,
people seeing
the stars on my socks
the stripes on my shoes
is the least
of
my
worries.

By, Eli Hunter
THE BUZZ ON BUGS
How Insects Sustain and Balance Campus Ecosystems
HONEY BEES
Honey Bees are critical to pollination. Without them, we wouldn't have all the beautiful flowers on campus!
LADY BUGS
Ladybugs control the pest population and eat harmful insects. They help reduce the number of pesticides on campus.
STINK BUGS
Stinkbugs feed on plant material and release it back into the soil. They're also a food source for other bugs and birds.
SNAILS
Snails work to decompose vegetation and their feces is rich in nutrients for the soil.
SILVERFISH
Silverfish are another decomposer. They break down organic waste, and are found in dorms because they're natural forigers.



*Illustrations by Alexa Cruz Abarca*

*Let me be treated with the dignity of a dying deer –*
*Cared by a stranger without a doubt, petting tattered fur into something smooth. Grass kissing me with its tendroles reaching out in memoriam. Peace granted without remorse.*

*Let me be treated with the dignity of a dying deer –*
*Life worth remembering although eclipsing a short segment of time. Though what I have done in this world is unremarkable, let me rest with the curtsy of an exploding star.*

*Let me be treated with the dignity of a dead deer –*
*Even when you struck me with metal I cannot comprehend, the how and the why misunderstood*
*You still carry me limp and sleepy, moonlight rays lulling me, your love is all I know.*

# My Beloved



*Poem by Alexa Cruz Abarca*

## Mars

*Written by Addison Otto*
*Collage by Rebecca Kartchner*

When Mars was a baby, he moved from America to Italy, where he spent his childhood as a military kid. At 8 years old, Mars returned to the motherland carrying a global perspective that many other Americans lack. How does Mars' childhood abroad shape his views of this country?

"In Italy, we got to travel a lot more. I feel like that made our lives even better. Being able to travel, I believe, is a commonly overlooked aspect of learning about others. It's hard to do, especially in America because of costs, but it does really help both socially and inwardly as you get to experience different cultures, different viewpoints, different people, different ideas. Because Europe is so culturally vast, you get to see a lot more and it's easier to have a better understanding of the world. Whereas in America, it's so big and so whitewashed, that you're only really seeing those people and hearing those opinions. I don't think it's enough to really understand the whole world."

"When you live in America, and you've been living in America your whole life, you're like, 'This is the whole world and America is number one.' But there's so many people outside of the world; it's so hard to see that when your country is so big and you haven't been outside of it."

"Production wise, I feel like people my age are just so used to having everything prepared so cheaply and quickly that they never experience handmade or thoughtfully-created things. Everywhere you look now, it's like, that was made super quickly with no thought. This fucking wall was probably made in like two minutes. Then you go to places in Europe where they've kept up a lot of traditional makings, and you get houses that are really well made. Old too, I guess, but they last. They're made from sustainable material, like stone and wood–and this is made from fucking paper."

"One thing that people will say when they go to Europe is that things taste better. It's because the quality is better, because more time went into it instead of just spraying it with pesticides and putting hormones into the genes to make it grow faster and stay fresh longer. And obviously it's better for your health too — there's a huge problem with obesity in America, and it's not just because people don't exercise, it's because of the stuff that we're eating and the fact that healthy food costs more than what we're paid. So it's hard for people to be able to eat it. And even the healthy stuff is just like a trend where people are profiting off of it and scamming while they're pretending that it's healthy, when it's just not."

"America was never great. We've had so many issues, I don't think there was a point where everything was perfect. Because, I mean, we started out by killing a bunch of Native Americans and claiming their land–I wouldn't count that era as great. We had the whole civil war — wouldn't count that as great.

The Great Depression —wouldn't count that as great. So I haven't seen where it's been great. At all. I don't think any country really has been great."

## “Sunny American Day”

*Written and Illustrated by steg*

I lay in a vapid parking lot
hot,
stale,
syrupy air thickens in my lungs.
My
picnic blanket feels scratchy under my knees-

lukewarm water bottle,

chips,
gnats,
this is the life.
I adjust my bikini top, lean back, look around-
scattered cars,
shopping carts,
quiet friends,
loud crows,

sweltering,

empty–
bubbling popping pavement like a cauldron.

This is all I’ve got.

The rivers and plains ain’t got nothing on this...

this is the paradise we built.

## So This Is How Liberty Dies: Thunderous Applause in the 2024 Election

*Written by Triton*

In Star Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith, Padme Amidala utters a chilling line as she watches the Republic fall: “So this is how liberty dies··· with thunderous applause.” In 2024, this quote has resurfaced with a sense of haunting urgency as Donald Trump returns to the presidency, and many Americans question whether the foundations of democracy are eroding before their eyes. The urgency of this situation cannot be overstated, and it calls for immediate and decisive action.

Donald Trump’s re-election campaign was more than just a political comeback; it was a triumph of populist fervor, aggressive nationalism, and institutional fatigue. As he assumes the presidency again, Trump’s rhetoric and agenda echo Palpatine’s rise in the Star Wars prequel trilogy with alarming similarity. Like Palpatine, Trump has used fear and division to consolidate power, and his disregard for democratic norms and penchant for strongman tactics have prompted critics to draw parallels between Trump and the Sith Lord, who disguised tyranny as salvation.

Proposals for mass deportations, expanding the use of the military in domestic affairs, and retribution against political enemies have raised alarms that the Empire isn’t something from a galaxy far, far away. It’s right here at home.

Just as the Jedi sought to resist the fall of the Republic, Democratic leaders and progressive activists have tried to defend democratic institutions. Figures like Tim Walz, Alexandria ocasio Cortez, and Ayanna pressley have taken on roles that feel not unlike Mace Windu or Yoda trying to hold the line, even as the Republic frays at the seams.

Yet, like the Jedi, Democrats face their challenges: infighting, a lack of cohesive strategy, and an electoral system tilted by gerrymandering and Senate overrepresentation. Though some call for reform, others fall into complacency, fearing that bolder action might backfire. As in the Jedi Temple, the risk is that inaction might be the very thing that enables the darkness to rise. The danger of not taking a stand, of not pushing for change, is that we allow the current political climate to continue, potentially leading to further erosion of our democratic institutions.

Joe Biden, the aged and weary figurehead of the Democratic Party, plays the role of Yoda in this political drama. He speaks in the language of moderation, telling us that the solution lies in compromise and careful negotiation. Yet, as we’ve seen repeatedly, his commitment to ‘uniting’ the country often means siding with the forces contributing to its dysfunction. Biden’s inability to confront the profound economic and racial disparities in American society makes his position increasingly untenable. Much like Yoda, he is an older figure who believes in the wisdom of the past. Still, in a crisis, his reliance on outdated ideas only hastens the demise of the Republic.

Kamala Harris, on the other hand, mirrors Mace Windu. She’s strong, articulate, and unapologetically assertive in her rhetoric. Still, ultimately, she too is tied to a system that perpetuates inequality. Windu may have wielded a lightsaber, but his allegiance to the Council’s bureaucracy blinded him to the forces of darkness within his ranks. Similarly, Harris has been a force for change in certain areas. Still, it remains a product of the same neoliberal machine that birthed Trump’s rise. Her proximity to power in the Biden administration often rendered her too complicit in the status quo to effect meaningful change.

The Clone Wars didn’t start overnight, nor did the American political crisis. The 2024 election occurred against deep national division and a civil cold war. Debates over abortion, climate change, racial justice, and economic inequality have turned civic discourse into battlegrounds. In its final days, the Senate feels more like the Galactic Senate, with lofty speeches masking backroom deals and rising authoritarianism. Protests have erupted, courts are under siege, and trust in the media and electoral process has cratered. With institutions faltering and power consolidating, many fear the American Republic may give way to an authoritarian order masquerading as “law and order.”

Still, even in the darkest times, the Star Wars saga reminds us that rebellions are built on hope. Civic engagement, grassroots movements, and new waves of politically active young people, many inspired by justice, inclusivity, and democratic ideals, may yet chart a different course. The Resistance in Star Wars was a small but determined force, as were the students, organizers, journalists, and reformers fighting today. It is not too late to restore balance to the Force. There is a potential for a new hope in our political landscape, and it is up to us to realize it.

May the Force be with us all in these dark days.

## Business in Biloxi

*Written by Dorian Blue*
*Painting by Antonia Flowers*

She let the damp heat take over her senses. Cicadas hummed and the waters of the gulf weren't far afield. She'd never been to Biloxi before, but it was high time. What should have been paradise was instead an aging sprawl of casinos and beaches caked in whatever filth the gulf tides brought in. The city had lost its confidence and luster and was well aware of it, languishing in bygone days that weren't so glorious themselves. But all of that was quaint to her. It had the unique despair of an American city, so young but already so hollowed out. She rolled up her sleeves, questioning her decision to wear anything other than a tank top.

She was parked on the side of a Mississippi River offshoot, slightly above the murky water. There was a small beach, nothing more than a spit of sand, a hundred feet downriver. A group of men in baseball caps and faded denim shared beers and blunts. They hadn't taken notice of her. It was pitch black and she was a lone motorcycle rider, gender indeterminate in the hazy dark. They talked about women, their construction work, and a trip to Shreveport they wanted to take when they had the money. It was a pipe dream and they all knew it. Whatever money they did have was funneled right back into their vices. She decided to let them be. She wasn't very hungry, and even though taking on four grown men was possible for her, it wasn't pleasant.

She hopped back onto the bike, speeding towards nowhere in particular. The sprawl of the city lent itself to many hidden enclaves. Most of them were boring, neighborhoods full of houses with peeling paint and RVs in the back. Some of them had more interesting features: gimmicky bars, boats for rental, and gun ranges. She'd even heard tell of a goth bar with people dressed up as vampires. The idea of dressing up as a vampire was always amusing to her. There was no one way that they all looked. If most vampires showed up looking as they normally did, they wouldn't fit the dress code at all. Such was the way of humans. Everything had to be delineated sharply, or else the true reality of the grays would scare the Jesus right out of them.

She tried to remember where the bar was. She had overheard a pair of locals talking about it. They hadn't bought the rumors that there were real vampires there. She wasn't so convinced either, seeing it as a 50/50 tossup. Her kind, especially the younger ones, liked using the gimmick to hide in plain sight. She didn't blame them; the trappings of it were fun. Though sometimes, it led to them being too reckless. She hoped whatever she found there wasn't going to warrant any clean up work on her part. It was always a dreary task to put misbehaving vampires back in line.

She merged onto the main highway, enjoying the air whipping past her as she sped up. She understood why the system of highways dominated the American landscape like a web of arteries. It brought unparalleled freedom to a population often caught in dead ends. The types of vampires that chose to settle in this vast country were different than the ones she was accustomed to. But, she liked the thrill. It had yet to disappoint her. She remembered the exit number mentioned. She had two more to go. She had to work hard to cut over to the rightmost lane. The cars around her

were unyielding, annoyed that she had her own place to go, but she prevailed. The exit ramp deposited her in a clearing of dead grass and concrete. It looked abandoned, until she saw a lone building on the edge. It looked almost abandoned, but she could already sense the activity around it.

Over the front door, garish neon red letters spelled out Ruthven's Roost. Someone had done their research. Wolf had enjoyed the novel about Lord Ruthven when it came out, but it was nothing extraordinary. It was less of a vampire story and more of an attempt of a jilted lover trying to claw back control from his mentor. She parked her motorcycle in the back parking lot. Cracks ran through the concrete, filled with weeds. There were only a few other vehicles, parked on the edges. She hoped her bike wouldn't stand out, at least not in a negative way. While getting into a scrape every now and then was fun, it became tiring fast. She wanted to be entertained by the locals, whether human or vampire.

As she walked to the door, loud music thumped from inside. It was electronic, but infused with darkness. There was a bouncer, human, in a black tank top and sunglasses. He examined her driver's license with little care. It was a well-crafted fake ID. She had new ones made almost every year.

The bar's interior was a decent attempt at aping a real goth club. In some areas, like the bar counter painted black, it shone. In others, like the dart board in the back, it failed. Whoever owned it wasn't committed enough to their own theming. She imagined it wasn't easy having a bar that was even a whiff alternative in such a bible thumping region. When fundamentalists had a target in mind, they dug their talons in. Without something sinful to rail at, what was the point? While many of the patrons were wearing black clothes, goth was certainly a stretch. They had more of a biker and metalhead feel, which was fine with her. While it was hard to hear over the noise of people talking, some sort of generic rock was playing.

She caught the eye of the bartender, a man with long black hair that had a few streaks of gray. In his black cut-off tee, spiked bracelets and smudged eyeliner, he was the most goth thing in the establishment.

"What can I getcha?" he said. Friendlier service than she had expected.

"Some whiskey on the rocks, please," she said. It seemed a fitting order.

"You feeling something more top shelf or low shelf?" He picked up a clean tumbler and shoveled a few ice cubes in.

"Something comfortably in the middle, if you don't mind," she said, taking out her wallet. "I trust your judgment."

He smiled, just a little. "So, where are you from? I don't think I've heard an accent like yours before."

"Norway," she answered.

"Wow," he said, turning briefly to fetch a bottle of whiskey. He flicked his wrist to pour it, the amber liquid making the ice crackle.

"What are you doing around here?"

She shrugged. "Just exploring. I love to motorbike, so your highway system has really been a boon for me."

He pushed the glass out to her. "Yeah I bet. Just don't go too fast around here. The cops are out there handing out tickets like candy."

"Good to know," she said, pulling out her wallet.

"Sure thing. That'll be eight bucks."

She handed him a ten. "Keep the change."

"Thanks," he said. "Hope you have a good rest of your trip."

She smiled. "I appreciate that."

Glass in hand, she spotted a table towards the back. A perfect place to people watch. Even after so many centuries of doing it, she always found something interesting from it. This time was no different, especially being in such a new locale. A few drunk women were dancing, being eyed by the men sitting nearby. The energy of the place was decidedly male, but her presence was going unnoticed. She figured if she sat there long enough, something would come her way. She sniffed the whiskey; it was noxious stuff, but it secured her place there.

She noticed another woman walk in. She had short, bleach blonde hair, spiked up with gel. The bartender recognized her, and they chatted as he made her drink, without her even having to order it. When he put it in front of her, she didn't pay. Wolf considered this. Did it point to a relationship between them, or did she know someone who owned the place? The woman looked around the room, her corset top laced tight. She looked Wolf right in the eye and winked. Wolf chuckled to herself. She liked being noticed by the right people. Right after, the woman sauntered over.

"I hope this seat isn't taken." She spoke with a honey-sweet drawl.

"Not at all," Wolf said, motioning for her to sit. "So what's your name?"

"Cheyenne," she said, taking the first sip of her drink and sighing.

"Lord I needed that."

"Tough day?"

She leaned in closer, a wild glint in her eye. "You wouldn't believe it."

"Tell me more," Wolf said.

# A Caring Sexual Ethic

*Written by Skyler Outler*
*Illustration by Triton*

*Introduction*

The goal of this paper is to abandon the traditional approach to sexual ethics that focuses on justifying sexuality, sexual deviances, and perversions by highlighting sameness in their attempt to be ethical. This reduction to sameness neglects the social aspect of ethical reasoning and decision-making, as it ignores the relationality we have with others and rarely tasks us to be good towards them. Through this, it fails to provide a practical ethical framework. Instead, the ethic that I am proposing values the alterity of others, prioritizes care, and recognizes the relational aspect of our sexual experiences. This revision of sexual ethics will first go in depth about the current sexual ethic and its downfalls. Then I will combine Feminist Care Ethics with Emmanuel Levinas's concept of the "Other" in Totality and Infinity to create a sexual ethic that focuses on "A relationship with the Other that does not result in divine or human totality, that is not a totalization of history but the idea of infinity." (Levinas 52). Through this, I will provide real-life examples and applications of this ethic. I hope this reformulation doesn't just bring improvement and flourishing in our sex lives, but also challenges us to be good to one another, not despite our differences, but in recognizing them.

*Analysis of Current Ethical Approach*

The current ethical outlook follows the Ethics of Justice approach that relies on universal norms based on rights, fairness, and equality. The Ethics of Justice's main focus is upholding an individual's rights through the universality of principles. This follows the ethics of Kant, Rawls, and other philosophers who base morality and ethical decision-making solely on reason and an ideal model of humanity. This ethical approach is solely concerned with the rights that a person has, and views ethical decision-making as "Conflicts between egoistic individuals' interests on the one hand, and universal moral principles on the other." (Held 12). Furthermore, this outlook views personhood to be identical as it is based on universality. Even though this attempts to promote equal treatment, it ignores the nuances and complexities that should be considered in ethical decision-making involving others. This Ethic attempts to promote equality strictly through laws and rules has downfalls such as objective blindness. This ignores that person's unique circumstances and only acknowledges the rights violated. The American Judicial system prides itself on this, with the depiction of Lady Justice with a blindfold over her eyes. I find that this illustrates the valuing of laws and principles over the people to whom they are applied and ignores the effects of these laws. The ethics of justice have similarities to the first generation of human rights and can be seen to be founded in them. (Faust). The first generation of human rights protects individuals civilly, and politically, and like justice is applied universally. This universality strips away the characteristics that make up a human identity and views them solely as a legal subject. In this, it aids justice's ability to enforce laws but the inability to sustain them, as it ignores the underlying causes of injustice and instances of inequality that can still be present even with these laws in place. Justice is shortsighted and it shows in laws and policies that don't fix the root of issues. Justice prioritizes universal principles and rights of individuals, by doing so it ignores the relationality and mutual concern for the other.

*Feminist Care Ethics*

Feminist Care Ethics is transformative as it lifts the veil of blindness from people's eyes since it views people as "relational and interdependent, not rational agents of the perspective of justice and rights." (Held. 72). In this ethical approach, care is a value and a practice. (Held 37, 39). Care is a value that we should strive to have and exhibit in our actions and practices, such as sensitivity, trust, mutual consideration, attentiveness, and responsiveness. The values of care are seen in caring practices, as they use these values to build relationships with others that are concerned with "The effectiveness of its efforts to meet needs, but also with the motives with which care is provided. It seeks good caring relations." (Held 36). Caring practices don't just uphold the values of care but are used to cultivate caring relations. Viewing care in this way dismisses the notion of care as a natural disposition and leads to the idea of care as a practice or skill that is perfected through caring relationships. Caring relationships are filled with mutual consideration and concern for others, as they often are in friendship, marriage, siblingship, parenting, and citizenship. For example, watching a movie in a public theater with others relies on practicing proper movie

theater etiquette, such as not being on our phones, talking during the movie, or acts of PDA. This is a caring relationship as we are exhibiting the values of care such as consideration and sensitivity to others in this shared space through movie theater etiquette. This does not mean that care is something that you achieve once and stop practicing as relations never cease to exist. Relations are the way we live and form bonds with others without them society would fall.

I understand care as a practice and value through Aristotelian ethics, with the concepts of Energeia and Hexis. Energeia or "being at work" is working towards the "active condition" or Hexis, which is where the values of care are demonstrated in caring relationships with others. (Sachs 2002). The relational self within the ethics of care recognizes the underlying connections that are present between people even among strangers. "Those who conscientiously care for others are not seeking primarily to further their own individual interests; their interests are intertwined with the persons they care for. Neither are they acting for the sake of all others or humanity in general; they seek instead to preserve or promote an actual human relation between themselves and particular others." (Held 12). Whether it is strangers in a movie theater, patrons in a store, or a loved one, these should be relations filled with trust, mutual consideration, and sensitivity.

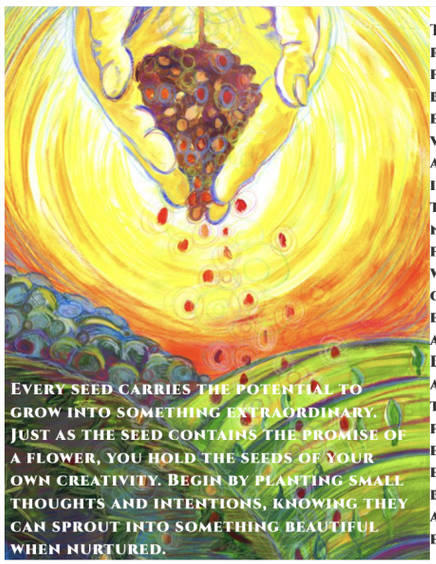
*The Two Sides of Totalization*

Emmanuel Levinas was unlike most philosophers of his time as he placed ethics as the "first philosophy" Levinas believed that the ethical duty that we have to others precedes the traditional philosophical pursuit of knowledge, such as ontology. In Totality and Infinity, Levinas's ethics is heavily concerned with the "Infinite Other" The Other is infinite in the sense that they are not graspable physically or comprehensible intellectually, and in attempts to have and understand them, we are getting further away from actually doing so. This causes us to want them more, and what he calls "Metaphysical Desire", this is

"desire without satisfaction which, precisely understands the remoteness, the alterity, and the exteriority of the other."(Levinas 34). Through things like war and ontology we are "grasping being out of nothing or reducing it to nothing, removing from its alterity" (Levinas 44). This is what Levinas calls totalization. Through totalization, we view people as objects and concepts to be understood, not for a better understanding of the other, but to utilize them. This is what I call totalization through possession, the way that one sees the objects in the world as things to be used and dominated "Neutralize the other who becomes a theme or an object, appearing that is, taking its place in the light- is precisely his reduction to the same." (Levinas 43). "The reduction to the same" is seeing the other as a "means to an end," meaning that when we physically touch or intellectually understand the other, we are doing so like using a pencil to write with or to break down a scientific concept to understand it. Levinas uses the example of ontology to make this point even further stating, "For the things, the work of ontology consists in approaching the individual not in its individuality but in its generality" (Levinas 44). Through totalization, we are obliterating their alterity, which reduces them to their utility. The Ethics of Justice views people similarly, through laws that uphold universal principles and rights. "Truth, which should reconcile person, here exists anonymously, universality presents itself as impersonal, and this is another inhumanity." (Levinas 46). The Ethics of Justice has its foundation in laws, rights, and universality in which we understand ourselves and others. This foundation creates a distance between one another and ignores the other's radical alterity. Levinas talks about totalization in another way, in terms of relation. In this conception of the word, totalization is how we interact with objects and others in the world. "This refusal of the concept drives the being that refuses it into the dimension of interiority. It is out of home with itself. The I is the mode in which the break up of totality, which leads to the presence of the absolutely Other, is uncertainly accomplished." (Levinas 118).

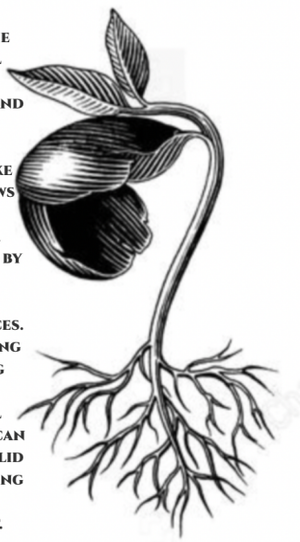
*Find full thesis, footnotes, and references on website.*

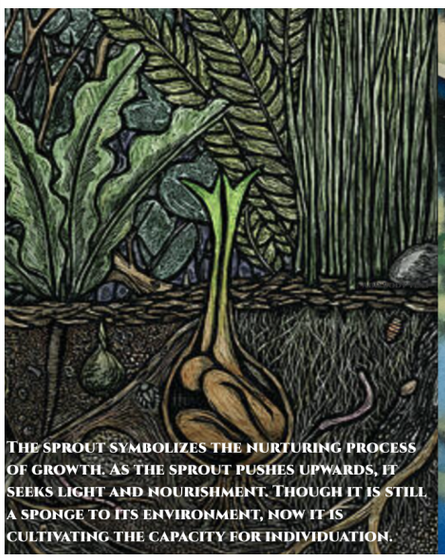
## Let the Flower Bloom: A Zine on Creativity By Kyla Ryman



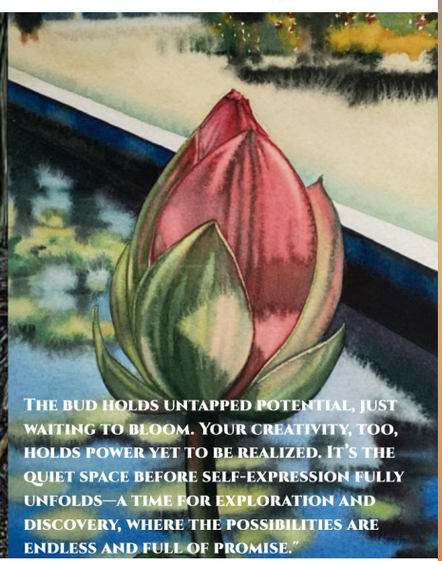
Every seed carries the potential to grow into something extraordinary. Just as the seed contains the promise of a flower, you hold the seeds of your own creativity. Begin by planting small thoughts and intentions, knowing they can sprout into something beautiful when nurtured.

The root represents the foundational beliefs, experiences, and values that anchor the individual. Like the root draws nourishment from the soil, we are shaped by our early environment and experiences. By confronting and reshaping these foundational elements, we can establish a solid base for healing and self-empowerment.





The sprout symbolizes the nurturing process of growth. As the sprout pushes upwards, it seeks light and nourishment. Though it is still a sponge to its environment, now it is cultivating the capacity for individuation.



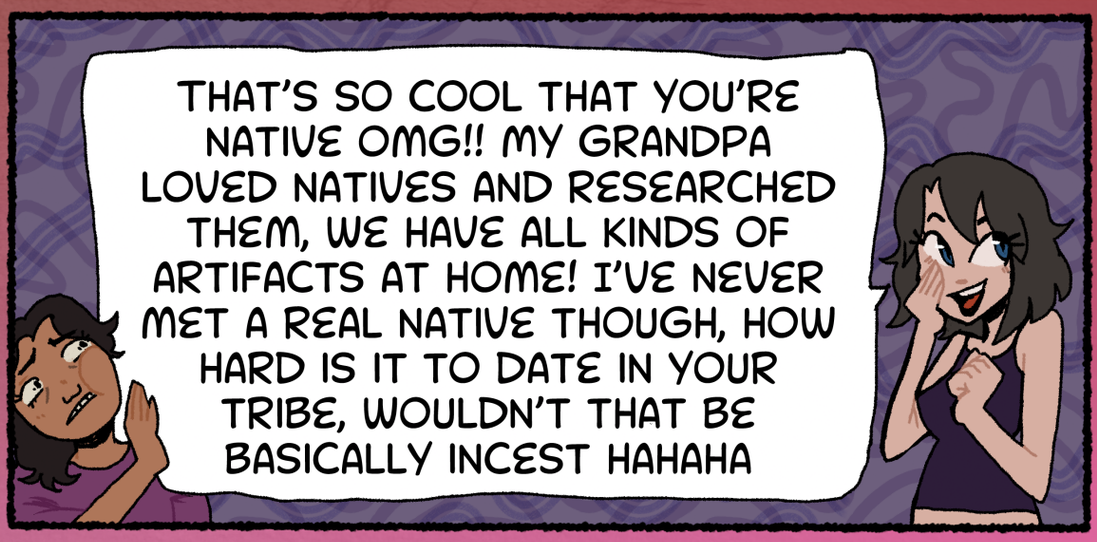
The bud holds untapped potential, just waiting to bloom. Your creativity, too, holds power yet to be realized. It's the quiet space before self-expression fully unfolds—a time for exploration and discovery, where the possibilities are endless and full of promise."

*Zine by Kyla Ryman*

Y'KNOW, YOU'RE NOT LIKE OTHER GIRLS...
OMFG KILL ME
SO MANY LATINAS ARE SUUUPER TOXIC AND LIKE, CLINGY!
I LIKE HOW FEISTY YOU ARE THOUGH!
YOU'RE A COOL LATINA <3

*Caucasity Comic by Alexa Cruz Abarca*

As the bud begins to open, it reaches towards the light, slowly revealing its true form. This stage symbolizes the courage to explore your creativity, to step into the unknown and embrace vulnerability. Just as a bud unfurls, you begin to peel away layers of internalized oppression, discovering new facets of yourself through artistic expression. The beauty of your authentic self is ready to blossom.
When the flower blooms, it reveals its full beauty. Your creative expression is no different. In this stage, you step fully into your power, sharing your true self with the world. This is the time to create, to speak your truth, and to inspire others with the beauty that only you can offer.
In a garden, many flowers grow side by side, each one unique but contributing to the beauty of the whole. Just as flowers thrive in diversity, so does creative expression in a supportive, inclusive community. When we share our stories and art with others, we create a space for collective healing and empowerment.
As the flower wilts, it prepares for renewal. The wilting process isn't an end, but a release—just as we must release old patterns and internalized oppression in order to make room for new growth. Let go of what no longer serves you, and know that this process is essential for your continued evolution.


THAT'S SO COOL THAT YOU'RE NATIVE OMG!! MY GRANDPA LOVED NATIVES AND RESEARCHED THEM, WE HAVE ALL KINDS OF ARTIFACTS AT HOME! I'VE NEVER MET A REAL NATIVE THOUGH, HOW HARD IS IT TO DATE IN YOUR TRIBE, WOULDN'T THAT BE BASICALLY INCEST HAHAHA

# From Comfort to Accountability:

*Written by L. Brennan*

Before reading this op-ed, I want to make two points clear. First, this text serves as a living document through which my perceptions change and grow across time. Because of this, the writing is by no means complete and should be consumed with this understanding. Secondly, while the writing is directed to white people concerning race, this struggle expands across all systems of oppression and can be applied to different forms of oppression, as one sees fit. Lastly, I would like to give credit to Ibram Kendi's book, "How to Be an Antiracist," which inspired this op-ed.

Dear my white brothers, sisters, and elders: this is a call to action. Injustice doesn't need our hatred; it only needs our inaction.

Many of us have been conditioned to see oppression as something external, believing that as long as we avoid overtly racist behavior, we are innocent. But if racism remains invisible to white eyes, it's easy to believe we've done enough. Like fish in water, we move through a world shaped by whiteness so seamlessly we rarely recognize it.

Consider the white college student who shakes off responsibility by claiming to treat everyone equally by holding space for all experiences. The question is, can we truly hold space for different experiences through equal treatment when the white spaces we exist in--ones of racial power dynamics, historically relevant contexts, internalized racism, and systemic inequality--fail to acknowledge the unique challenges faced by marginalized communities? This is not disengaging from race--it's reinforcing it. Ignoring these realities can perpetuate discrimination and invalidate the lived experiences of people of color, as it overlooks the historical injustices that continue to impact their lives. Lastly, a color-blind approach can undermine efforts to address systemic inequalities and reinforce existing power imbalances, ultimately hindering meaningful dialogue and progress toward social justice. Claiming to treat everyone equally does not protect anyone--it protects the status quo, allowing implicit biases and oppressive structures to persist unchecked.

Moments like these reveal that we are not passive bystanders; we are shaped by and complicit in the systems around us. If this reading brings up feelings of discomfort, that is a sign that you're beginning to see the water we swim in. We must lean into the discomfort and learn how this fear of discomfort maintains the status quo. A reckoning has come, and we must acknowledge our role in racism not because of what we fear people see in us, but what we fail to see in ourselves.

Anti-Racism Defined

Anti-racism is not just about being "not racist"; it is an active process of identifying, challenging, and changing the systems, policies, and beliefs that sustain racial inequality. Ibram Kendi defines racism as the combination of racist ideas and racist policies, which work together to legitimize and maintain these inequalities. For example, racist narratives often blame poverty on individual laziness or personal failure, ignoring the systemic barriers that produce inequality--barriers like redlining, which restricted Black families' ability to own homes and build generational wealth. These narratives don't just misrepresent reality; they shift blame away from the oppressive systems onto the very people harmed by them. Anti-racism as an ideology seeks to combat and replace these harmful narratives and the structures of inequality they uphold.

When we allow our ignorance to persist, we allow racist ideas to thrive. When we fail to confront racist structures, we uphold them with our inaction. Becoming an antiracist is not about perfecting a set of beliefs or arriving at a single destination. It is about taking up a lifelong responsibility to resist systems of oppression in every space we occupy, from our external environments to our own minds. In the pages that follow, I will explore how education broadens our vision, how decentralization reshapes our engagement, and how action becomes a bridge between our values and the world we seek to build. These practices are not isolated steps but interwoven responsibilities that call us to live differently, think differently, and, most importantly, act together.

Education

The more we indulge ourselves in critical education, the more pluralistic our perspectives become. Ignorance breeds fear, and fear breeds hatred. These seeds of hatred are dangerous, and our job as white people is to follow our hatred, fear, and ignorance to its roots, and pull them out--replacing the ignorance with diverse perspectives that are more inclusive, equitable, and reflective of humanity's similarities and beautiful complexities.

As proposed by Italian Marxist

# A Call to Action for White People

philosopher Antonio Gramsci, our imagination is limited to the information we have access to. Knowledge is what gives people power and makes them dangerous. It provides us with definitions and frameworks of thought--tools that expand our autonomy of mind and grant us a greater number of lenses through which to view the world. Kendi states, "If we do not do the work of defining the people we want to be in language that is stable and consistent, we can't work towards stable and consistent goals." Some of the most transformative moments in dismantling racism come from arriving at foundational definitions and understanding what we are truly working toward.

White people, and all of humanity for that matter, must commit to the lifelong practice of engaging critically with our learning, as well as with both internal and external frameworks of thought. As Angela Davis reminds us, we cannot accept "what is" simply because it's "what is". Reimagining entire systems requires an ongoing, intentional process of challenging our own perceptions, dismantling harmful norms, and reconstructing the world one step at a time. It is a slow crawl, but we do not move alone. We stand on the shoulders of those who came before us, learning from their struggles and insights. Our duty is not just to inherit their knowledge but to push it further--to become even more radical, more fearless, and more dangerous.

Decentralization

To establish a shared understanding, decentralization involves actively shifting power from a single central authority to multiple, more distributed entities.

As mentioned earlier, racist ideas exist to help protect and legitimize systems of unequal power. These ideas often become social norms--unwritten rules about what is acceptable or expected in society. Those who hold power have the most influence over these norms--and, in turn, help maintain their own positions of authority.

For white people, this means we often benefit from and help maintain a system where our position is dominant. Because norms shape how society functions, having the power to influence them means having the power to shape society itself. Our positions of power establish beauty standards based on whiteness and communication norms centered on "Standard American English," reinforcing a system where white norms are seen as the default and superior, marginalizing non-white identities.

This is why social movements reclaim harmful words and push against conventional norms that limit autonomy, like gender. If movements can reclaim things like slurs, they can rehumanize their identities and combat marginalization.

Our responsibility as white people is to use our power to actively break down these hierarchies. Because we hold privilege in a system built around whiteness, we often exist in a world that reflects and affirms our experiences. This alignment can make it easy to remain unaware of the white-centered lens through which we view the world--a lens we often mistake as neutral. But this narrow perspective not only renders the experiences of others invisible; it also drowns out their voices. By assuming our view is the default, we erase the realities of those who are marginalized by the very systems we benefit from. This is where the concept of positionality becomes critical. As white people, we lack the lived experience that comes from being on the receiving end of structural oppression. Without this lived experience, we should not be at the head of the fight involved in combatting these structures. We need to seek out POC voices and perspectives to support and guide us in this fight. As allies, it's crucial to remain aware of the power dynamics within our society and recognize how our actions may inadvertently reinforce them.

That means our role is not to lead, but to follow--to take a supporting position and walk behind the leadership of marginalized communities, respecting the paths they carve. When we use our privilege to amplify their voices, we shift away from reinforcing hierarchies. The goal is not to raise ourselves or any one group above another, but to help dismantle the hierarchy itself--replacing dominance with equity and control with collective power.

This last part is crucial. Many white people turn away from anti-racist ideology because they think it vilifies whiteness--that decentrilization means an erasure of white voices and a demand for constant self-loathing and guilt around their identity.

*Continue the story on the Insurgent website.*

# Playlist to immigrate to

...according to a Mexicano who came to Oregon in 1998

- "Too Close" – Next
- "The Boys is Mine" – Brandy and Monica
- "You're Still the One" – Shania Twain
- "Gettin' Jiggy Wit It" – Will Smith
- "Together Again" – Janet Jackson
- "Iris" – Goo Goo Dolls
- "All My Life" – K-Chi and JoJo
- "Tell Me" – Destiny's Child

Una de las primeras cosas que sentí, fue el sentir que había defraudado, sobre todo a mi papá. El día que me vine, él no fue a despedirse y se fue a trabajar, tanto esfuerzo y sacrificio por parte de ellos, mamá incluida; quizás estaba triste, defraudado. Desilusionado o enojado, eso no lo sabré. Obviamente, sentía miedo pero también mucha ilusión, ya que tenía en mente regresar en dos años, pero la vida tiene otros caminos, que no son precisamente los que imagine.

El idioma, cuando vivía en México creí que mi nivel de inglés era bueno, hasta que llegué aquí. Tuve suerte de tener un trabajo donde había muchos mexicano y la comunicación con los estadounidenses fue "fácil," porque tenía quien me tradujera. Aunque la primera vez que quise hablar en inglés con mi manager, prácticamente me culpe a mi mismo de algo que no había hecho, al decir "I no," según yo en español, "Yo no," mi jefe escucho, "I know." Eso apresuro mi decisión de ir a la escuela, al PCC, a aprender inglés, solo termine los cursos básicos de 4 niveles. Anses después hice el GED.

Algo que ahora me da risa, es que algo tan simple como una aspiradora, para mi fue novedoso, de donde vengo nunca use una, y cuando llegué aquí, solo por el hecho de usarla, me ofrecí a aspirar la alfombra del departamento donde vivíamos.

También tenía la idea que todos aquí, vivían en casa grande y propias, se me hizo increíble ver gente viviendo en las calles y que no tenían qué comer, creí que todos los estadounidenses, como los que iban de vacaciones a Acapulco, lo tenían todo; ¡que todos tendrían educación superior!

En cuanto a música, no hubo sorpresa, de hecho cuando llegué pregunté cuál era el canal de MTV, crecí escuchando música de los 80 's, 90' s.

Seguramente hay más cosas que no recuerdo, algunas más simples que otras, otras que no tenían sentido, como los “garages sales.” ¿por qué vender tan barato las cosas que aún sirven?

Otra cosa que me llamó la atención fue lo limpio que está, el orden vial, las reglas que si se siguen, algo que fue más evidente esta vez que fui a México el pasado enero de este año.

La primera comida que probé aquí fue una hamburguesa, que no me gusto porque tenía pickles, pero tenía hambre y me la comí. (Alexa note, the burger chain he got his food at was where I got a scholarship!)

Illustration by Alexa Cruz Abarca, excerpts by my father and family photos

# INSURGENT 25

Issue 36.1
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